

A History of the Tasmanian Wine Industry

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Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

University of Tasmania

April, 2012

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ABSTRACT

Viticulture and winemaking have become important industries in Tasmania, with a rich narrative dating back to the 1820s, but little work had been done on researching and recording this history. This thesis sets out to fill that gap, dividing the history into three distinct phases.

The first, from settlement to 1870 was unsuccessful and it was generally accepted by the end of that phase that Tasmania was “not a wine growing country”. The second brief phase, in the 1880s and 1890s, covers Diego Bernacchi’s attempts to establish a commercial vineyard on Maria Island, with his lack of success confirming the conventional wisdom. By the turn of the century, Tasmania was the only state without a commercial wine industry. The third phase began in the 1950s and has seen the establishment of a vibrant and viable industry, rapidly acquiring an international reputation for premium cool climate wine.

This thesis attempts to explain the apparent contradiction of the failure of the early attempts and the success of the current phase. The central argument is that the difference lies largely in luck and circumstance, rather than any variation in will or effort. I argue that precisely the same factors which mitigated against the success of earlier attempts- climate, technology and public taste- now promote its success. Earlier impediments have become competitive advantages.

I have also examined the social and cultural background of the different eras, and attempted to track the evolving motivations for aspiring vignerons, using McIntyre’s theory of a “civilized industry producing a civilizing drink” in the earlier eras and the concepts of vineyards as “vanity projects” in the current context.

The thesis also attempts to explain why, in comparison with similar regions nationally and internationally, and despite widespread success and praise for its wines, the Tasmanian industry has grown so slowly. I argue that the Australian wine industry has been slow to adapt to changing circumstances, continuing to develop areas which were

initially chosen for fortified wine production, rather than make cool climate investments, despite the evidence of climate change, and evolving public taste.

52 oral history recordings were made in the research for the current era, using a high quality digital recorder, and these will go into a permanent industry archive. The narrative itself has value in providing a permanent record of the beginnings of an important industry, and acknowledging the contributions of its many pioneers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people to thank for their help in bringing this thesis to completion. Firstly I should thank my academic supervisors, Dr. Tom Dunning and Dr. David Dunstan, for their patience in undertaking the often thankless task of converting me from journalist to historian.

My thanks also to the staff of the Tasmanian State Library and the Tasmanian Archive in both Hobart and Launceston for their unfailing courtesy and co-operation. I am particularly grateful to Tony Marshall of the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office for his personal interest, advice and encouragement.

Within the Tasmanian wine industry I have had nothing but interest and support. I am grateful to the many industry identities who found the time to allow me to record oral history interviews, and to Wine Tasmania for generous access to their archives and their photocopier. I would particularly like to thank the many people who allowed me access to their personal archival material- to Stuart and Brenda Bryce for access to Jean Miguet's correspondence, Professor Bob Menary, Eric and Jetta Phillips, Andrew Pirie, Andrew Hood, Graeme Lynch, Laurie Wing and special thanks to Roderick Cuthbert who rescued and preserved the invaluable archives of the Vineyards Association of Tasmania. Thanks also to Sally McShane for first sparking my interest in the project and for her work in creating a digital archive for the industry in the north of the state.

I owe a particular debt to Andrew Pirie for his interest and assistance throughout the project.

I should also acknowledge the assistance of the Federal Group, who expressed their support for the Tasmanian wine industry in a practical way by providing me with accommodation around the state over the last two years. A suite at Wrest Point made my frequent trips to Hobart much more enjoyable and made the whole project financially viable.

Finally, my heartfelt thanks to my wife and lifelong companion Sue, for her love, patience and unwavering support for a project that has absorbed much of my time, energy and money over the last two years. This thesis would never have been finished without her perceptive proofreading and computer wizardry.

*This thesis is dedicated to four men who laid the foundation
for today's Tasmanian wine industry*

Jean Miguet

Claudio Alcorso

Graham Wiltshire

Andrew Pirie

I have seen many a thousand acres of land worth little for anything but vineyards. Your readers may start at this, but it is true all the same.... It may astonish many to be told that this northern portion of the Island is capable of producing finer and rarer kinds of wine than we can ordinarily grow in Victoria. Our climate is too hot- our autumn at any rate is too hot to admit of our making fine wines like Hock, Sauternes, Chablis, Burgundy etc. The grapes ripen rapidly and the fermentation goes on tumultuously. It is impossible to grow in the same place strong full bodied wines like the ports, sherries and maderas and fine bouquet wines like the sauternes, hock and burgundy. These latter require a particularly cold climate and absolutely demand long and slow fermentation to produce those esters which yield their distinctive bouquet and flavor. The northern portion is the place for yielding this rare class of wine.

Rev. John Bleasdale, in a letter published in the Cornwall Chronicle on June 18, 1870, after time spent in George Town, northern Tasmania.

One of the frequently asked questions on Tasmania's viticulture is, if it is proving so successful now, why didn't it happen before? I think any practicing vigneron at this latitude knows the answer- because it is so difficult to get everything right all the time. Every season we have a new disease or problem achieving prominence, but fortunately the rewards are high for those who can overcome the obstacles and find the right answers.

Andrew Pirie - Vineyards Association of Tasmania Newsletter, May, 1988

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INTRODUCTION

In 1956, Jean Miguet planted the first Tasmanian vineyard of the modern era. Through a friend, Kay Wallace, he sent a letter to a number of mainland wine companies, saying

I assure you sincerely this is not an idle request from someone who wants to manufacture 'plonk' on the sly, but a genuine French vintner whose father and grandfather were both connected with the 'great wines of France'

Miguet's early promise of "not just plonk" seems to me to encapsulate the unwavering commitment to quality that has been a dominant characteristic of the Tasmanian industry ever since.

The idea for the thesis came from conversations with friends in the industry, who shared with me the belief that Tasmania was destined to become a premium cool climate wine producer on the world stage. We also believed that it was important that the beginnings of the modern industry be researched and recorded while many of the industry's early pioneers were around to tell their story. It was also clear, from the work of Dr Don Martin, that Tasmania had an interesting 19th century viticultural history that was yet to be explored in detail, and this raised the further question of why, given what are now perceived as Tasmania's natural advantages, Tasmania was, at the turn of the century, the only Australian state without a commercial wine industry.

It is tempting to speculate on how different this story would have been had the French colonized Tasmania. In 1803, Governor King in Sydney was writing to Sir Evan Nepean in London:

It was reported to me soon after the French Ships sailed that a principal object of their voyage was to fix on a Place at Van Diemen's Land for a Settlement.....¹

This precipitated the dispatch of Lieutenant Bowen to form a settlement at Risdon Cove, so the original settlers were of course Anglo Saxon. This posed three problems for viticulture in Tasmania; firstly the English were not a wine drinking nation, or at least

¹ *Historical Records of Australia*, vol. 4, Series One (Sydney: Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament, 1997). P.248

had no taste for table wine, preferring heavier ports and sherries, liberally fortified with spirits. Secondly, the colonisers had no knowledge, experience or skills in either viticulture or wine making. Finally, the potential of Tasmanian viticulture would be limited by the fact that inevitably the home country would be its principal export market, and there was little demand for the styles of wine to be produced in the island's cooler climate.

The prospects for a Tasmanian wine industry in the 19th century were to some extent shaped by events in Europe 200 years earlier.

Up to the 15th century, the British had an unquenchable thirst for table wine, drinking 10 times as much per capita as they do today. This was largely due to the fact that Bordeaux was at the time a province of England and huge quantities of a light "clairret"² were imported. There were also substantial vineyards in England.³ In the 17th century, a tariff war broke out between Britain and France- French wines were prohibited for a time then taxed heavily- the duty was more than double that for Portuguese wine- French wines virtually disappeared from the market and their inferior substitutes led to a general decline in wine consumption⁴.

British merchants discovered the dark, austere wines of the Douro region which became known as "black-strap", and to ensure they arrived in England in good condition, they began adding a measure of brandy before shipment.

Relations with France were broken off completely by the War of Spanish Succession in 1702 and in 1703 the British signed the Methuen Treaty which laid down tariff advantages for Portuguese wine that were to last 150 years. To make matters worse, in 1728 the British Parliament banned the importation of bottled (i.e. French) wine, allowing only barrels into the country, thus greatly increasing the risk of spoilage in unfortified wines.

² Meaning "light coloured" in French

³ Jon Hurley, *A Matter of Taste- a History of Wine Drinking in Britain* (Stroud, U.K.: Tempus, 2005). P.53

⁴ Ibid. pp102-3

Port became very popular, with more than 500,000 hectolitres exported in 1799. Over 60% of this went to Britain, earning Port the epithet the ‘Englishman’s wine’. At this time, three quarters of the wine imported into Britain came from Portugal.

Over the next 20 years, the wine became even stronger. What had begun as a three percent addition of spirits rose to 10 percent, then 17, and finally 22 percent by 1820.

In the first half of the 19th century, sherry also became important, with imports growing from 10,000 butts⁵ in 1810 to 68,000 butts in 1873, representing some 40% of Britain’s total wine imports.

Consumption was prodigious- the term “three bottle man”, applied to a man who could drink three bottles of port in a sitting, was a mark of prestige and seems to reflect a heavy drinking culture amongst Englishmen of social standing⁶. Phillips comments that “the term ‘drunk as a lord’ seems to have become entirely literal”⁷.

So for aspiring Tasmanian viticulturists, there was little demand amongst the Anglo Saxon colonists for the lighter wines Tasmania was best equipped to supply, with the possible exception of champagne. Nevertheless, vineyards were planted all over the state in the first 50 years of settlement, partly for self sufficiency, but also, as Julie McIntyre suggests in her thesis⁸, as part of the process of “civilizing” a wild country.

The reasons for the demise of 19th century viticulture are fully examined in Chapter 4, but it is interesting to observe that once conventional wisdom dictated that “Tasmania was not a winegrowing country” that assertion was not challenged for some 70 years, despite the readily-made comparisons with colder European winegrowing regions. I use “conventional wisdom” in the sense of a widely held but unexamined belief.

⁵ A butt held around 480 litres, equivalent to a pipe.

⁶ In fairness to the gentlemen of the time, it should be remembered that a bottle then contained one pint- about two thirds of a present bottle.

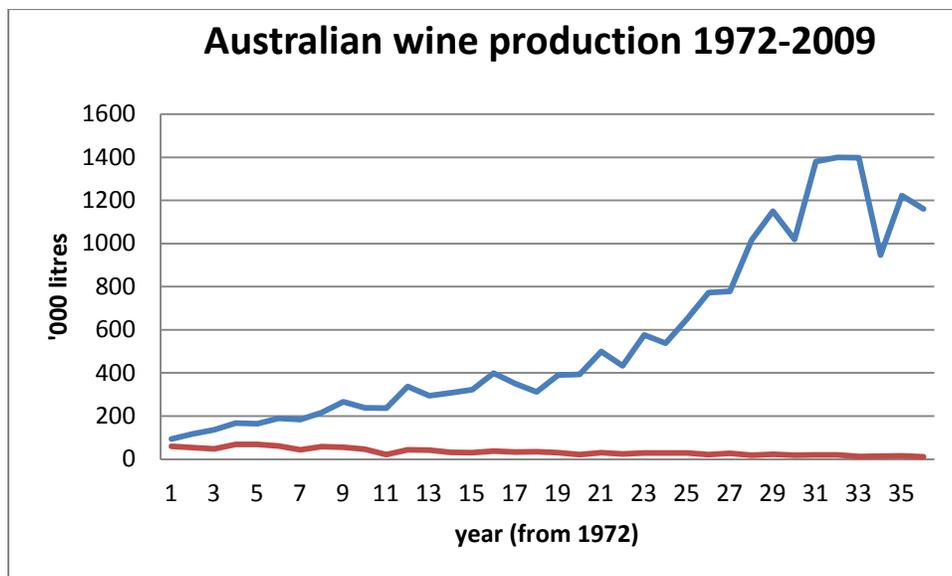
⁷ Rod Phillips, *A Short History of Wine* (London: Penguin, 2001).

⁸ J.A. McIntyre, "A "Civilized" Drink and A "Civilizing" Industry: Wine Growing and Cultural Imagining in Colonial New South Wales" (University of Sydney, 2008).

Of course, part of the reason for the idea's dominance was that during that period there was little interest in or demand for table wine in Australia- the market was dominated by fortified wines- principally ports and sherries.

In 1950, 86% of all Australian wine grapes went into fortified wines. Just 45 years later, in 1995, 94% of wine grapes went into table wine. Over that period the production of table wine went from 12 million litres to 458 million litres, while fortified wines dropped from 47 million litres to 25 million litres. In 1974, when Tasmania's first commercial vineyards were planted, this boom in the demand for table wine was just gathering momentum.

Figure 1



Data from Wine Australia *Beverage Wine Production* (2010)

This graph, with the blue line representing table wine, and the red fortified wine, demonstrates the wave that Tasmanian viticulture has been able to ride over the last 40 years.

The emergence of this significant industry in the state has not been recorded. National wine industry writers like James Halliday⁹, Len Evans¹⁰, John Beeston¹¹, Nicholas Faith¹² and Charles Gent¹³ make only cursory reference to the modern Tasmanian industry, although in fairness the attention they give it is probably proportional to its size- less than one half of one percent of national production- and its relatively recent beginnings.

Consequently the author has had little previous literature to reference and has based the research on primary sources- the records of the Vineyards Association of Tasmania over 30 years, Government documentation, industry reports and documents, contemporary newspaper accounts and, most importantly, some 47 hours of oral history interviews with 50 of the people who played a part in the creation of the industry. I believe that this thesis presents, for the first time, an accurate account of the beginnings of a significant Tasmanian industry, detailing not only when and where it happened, but explaining how and why.

Early in the research process, I joined the Oral History Association of Australia, and used their Oral History Handbook¹⁴ as a starting point for learning the techniques and pitfalls of oral history interviewing. Memories can of course be unreliable, so contemporary newspaper accounts have been used wherever possible to check dates and other details. Many interviews have covered the same events, so evidence has been cross referenced. Allowance has also been made for interviewees' natural and often unconscious desire to present themselves in the best possible light in what will be a formal history of the industry.

⁹ James Halliday, *The Australian Wine Encyclopaedia* (Melbourne: Hardie Grant Books, 2009).

¹⁰ Len Evans, *Len Evans' Complete Book of Australian Wine* (Sydney: Weldon Publishing, 1990).

¹¹ John Beeston, *Concise History of Australian Wine* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2001).

¹² Nicholas Faith, *Australia's Liquid Gold* (London: Mitchell Beazley, 2003).

¹³ Charles Gent, *Mixed Dozen - the Story of Australian Winemaking since 1788* (Sydney: Duffy & Snellgrove, 2003).

¹⁴ Beth M. Robertson, *Oral History Handbook* (Adelaide: Oral History Association of Australia (S.A. Branch), 2006).

Cool Climate Viticulture

Genuinely cool viticultural climate regions, while common in Northern Europe, are rare in Australia. Since it has become seen as a marketing advantage, the term “cool climate” has been completely devalued in Australia, with many areas claiming cool climate status that would not meet any definition of the term. In *The Oxford Companion to Wine*, contributors Dr Richard Smart and Dr John Gladstones define “cool climate” as a region which has a regional average mean temperature for the growing season (October to April) of less than 16°C.¹⁵ In Australia, this limits the classification to the whole of Tasmania, parts of the Adelaide Hills in South Australia and Drumborg in Victoria.

James Halliday, in his *Wine Atlas of Australia and New Zealand*, defines “cool climate” as regions with a Mean January Temperature¹⁶ (MJT) between 17°C and 18.9°C. Using climate data provided to him by Dr Richard Smart, the only Australian regions qualifying are Tasmania (Launceston)¹⁷, Ballarat, Macedon and Drumborg.¹⁸

The third evaluation system, devised by American academics Maynard Amerine and A.J. Winkler, was by measuring “heat degree days” (HDD). This involved measuring the difference between 10°C and the mean temperature of each month, multiplied by the number of days in the month and calculated over the entire seven month (October to April in the Southern hemisphere) growing season. They then defined Region 1, or coolest climate, as areas with average regional HDDs below 1371°C (2500°F).¹⁹ By this criterion, again using Dr. Smart’s figures, the Australian viticultural areas to qualify for the “cool climate” tag would be Tasmania, Macedon, Ballarat, Drumborg, the Adelaide

¹⁵ Jancis Robinson (ed), *The Oxford Companion to Wine* (London: Oxford University Press, 1994). P.280

¹⁶ The Mean January Temperature (MJT) system assumes that January is the warmest month- this is not always the case and an alternative evaluation system uses Mean Temperature of the Warmest Month (MTWM)

¹⁷ Temperature readings were only available for Hobart and Launceston- Hobart fell into the “cold” category.

¹⁸ James Halliday, *Wine Atlas of Australia and New Zealand* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1991).pp. 28-31.

¹⁹ Ibid. p.28

Hills and a few high altitude sites above 700- 800 m altitude at latitudes less than 37 Deg south.

The reason that “cool climate” has become a marketing buzzword is that it is generally acknowledged (and understood by educated consumers) that the world’s finest table wines come from cool climate regions, where long, cool ripening periods allow the flavour of wine grapes to mature fully, while retaining freshness and acidity.²⁰

The emergence of Tasmanian wine must also be seen in a national and a global context.

The planting of the first 20th century vineyard in Tasmania coincided exactly with the first Australian Wine Board marketing campaign to promote the use of table wine.

This was motivated partly by a decline in Australian wine consumption (including fortified wine) from 8.2 litres per year in 1951 down to 5.2 litres in 1956. The 1960s decade saw an increase to 8.9 litres per capita, mainly due to the growing popularity of red wine. In the 1970s, white wine achieved similar popularity and the per capita figure more than doubled, to 18.2 litres²¹.

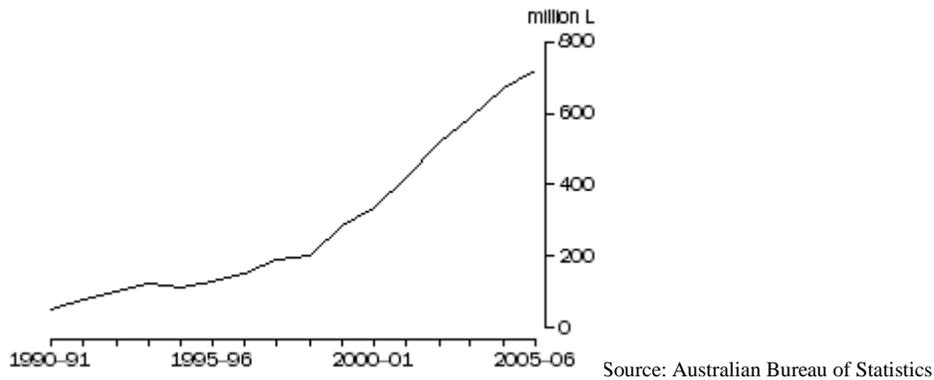
From the 1980s, export added impetus to growing local consumption. In 1981, Australia exported just eight million litres- six years later, 1987, this had grown to 39 million litres and in another 20 years, by 2007, this was to reach an extraordinary 805 million litres exported. Although Australia still produced less than 4% of the world’s wine, it became the fourth largest exporter, behind just France, Italy and Spain²². The ABS graph below shows a 700% increase in exports over 15 years.

²⁰ Ben Wagner, Fred Peacock, and Rob Henderson, *Viticulture in Tasmania* (Hobart: The Department of Primary Industry, 1991).p.7.

²¹ Chris Quirk, "Just the Facts," in *The Great Australian Wine Book*, ed. Robert Mayne (Sydney: Reed Books, 1985). P.491

²² Wine Australia, "History of Wine in Australia," www.wineaustralia.com.

Figure 2



Domestic sales were fairly flat over the same period so that the dramatic growth in production relied solely on the continued growth of exports.

Figure 3



While there was little growth in the gross amount of wine sold over that period, there was a pronounced trend towards quality, and this was common to most Western countries.

This led to an expansion of cool climate production globally, with development in South

and North America, Canada, Eastern Europe and, perhaps most dramatically, New Zealand.

While Tasmania doubtless benefited from this market growth, both export and domestic, a surprisingly slow rate of vineyard development in the state has avoided the boom/bust cycle common to many other wine regions and has allowed the industry to consolidate without significant problems of oversupply. This will be examined in detail in Chapter 11.

This thesis suggests that the current success of the Tasmanian industry, and its 19th century failure, were both largely a product of timing and circumstance, and that the very factors which proved impediments to early success have become the competitive advantages on which the future of the state's industry is built. In summary those factors were:

Climate

The Tasmanian climate in the early 19th century was significantly cooler than today, and presented formidable challenges to colonial viticulturists. A warming environment has made Tasmania a more viable cool climate region. This, combined with improved technology and maturing public taste, has made cool climate a significant advantage, rather than an impediment.

Technology and Expertise

The scarcity of immigrants from wine producing countries made a lack of technology and expertise a major impediment to early Tasmanian viticultural efforts. Today Australia is a world leader in wine technology and education, and many talented young winemakers are drawn to Tasmania.

Public taste

The 19th century preference for heavy, sweet, fortified wine which Tasmania could not produce has moved to a preference for lighter table wine well suited to Tasmanian conditions.

CHAPTER 1

“AS FAR SUPERIOR AS FINE PORT TO BLACKSTRAP”

The common grape vine (*vitis vinifera*) is not native to Australia²³. The first vines planted on what was to become Tasmanian soil were carried on the H.M.S. *Bounty* which arrived at Bruny Island in August 1788, and anchored in Adventure Bay, where Furneaux and Cook had anchored before them. On August 30, 1788, the ship’s master, Lt. William Bligh, records in his log that he and Mr Nelson planted a variety of fruits and vegetables including “nine vines”.²⁴

Bligh was however, aware of the native habit of burning the country, so was pessimistic of their survival. He was correct; on his return to Adventure Bay in 1792, there was just a single apple tree surviving and no sign of the vines or any of his other plantings.

With the progressive colonisation of the continent from 1788 onward, achieving self sufficiency was clearly a priority for both colonisers and settlers, so cuttings and rooted grape vines were part of the cargo of many colonising vessels, beginning with the First Fleet. On the voyage, Captain Arthur Phillip made a final stop at the Cape Colony, Cape of Good Hope, where the fleet stocked up on locally produced wine and a large variety of seeds and plant stock. At that time the Dutch colony was an established wine producer with a good knowledge of viticulture. In the journal of Judge-Advocate David Collins, he records that they obtained not only the seeds and plants of *vitis vinifera*, but also information about “the culture, the soil, and the proper time of introducing them into the ground”.²⁵

²³ The Hobart Town Courier of August 8, 1829 reports the discovery of “an indigenous species of the vine” at St Patrick’s Head. This was probably the Macquarie Harbour Vine *Muehlenbeckia gunnii*

²⁴ Lt. W. Bligh, *The Log of the H.M.S. Bounty 1787-1789* (Sydney: Genesis Publications, 1975). August 30, 1788

²⁵ David Collins, *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales* (Adelaide: Libraries Board of South Australia, 1971).

These vines and seeds were planted in Captain (then Governor) Phillip's garden at Sydney Cove within a few days of their arrival, but the vines did not thrive.

Some success was enjoyed at Rose Hill (now Parramatta) where the soil was better and the climate less wet and humid than on the coast. In 1795 Phillip Schaffer produced ninety gallons of "tolerably good" wine, probably Australia's first.²⁶

Two Frenchmen were brought out to lend their expertise to the development of viticulture²⁷, but by March, 1804, Governor King was writing to Lord Hobart in London²⁸ that the grapes had been blighted²⁹ for three years in a row, and that the Frenchmen "knew very little of the business". The wine they made was so bad that King would not even send a sample to England.

In 1798, during their circumnavigation of Van Dieman's Land in the Norfolk, George Bass and Matthew Flinders saw viticultural possibilities on the banks of the Derwent, albeit for second class land:

*"The land around Prince of Wales Cove is tolerably level and frequently clayey: the worst of it produces excellent food for cattle, even up to the high mountain which lies at its back. Being a stiff close soil, it is perhaps better adapted to the growth of grape vines, than of grain."*³⁰

In 1803, Tasmania, or Van Diemen's Land as it was then known, became the second British colony founded, directly in response to reports that the French were about to colonise Van Diemen's Land³¹, an eventuality which would have made a considerable

²⁶ Beeston, *Concise History of Australian Wine*. p4.

²⁷ Frederick (ed) Watson, *Historical Records of Australia* (Sydney: Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament, 1921). I/III p.435

²⁸ Ibid. I/IV. P.460

²⁹ The "blight" which plagued vines in early NSW is generally considered to have been the disease *anthracnose*

³⁰ Matthew Flinders, *Van Diemen's Land Revealed. Flinders and Bass and Their Circumnavigation of the Island in the Colonial Sloop Norfolk 1798-1799* (Hobart: Blubber Head Press, 2009).p.98

³¹ James Backhouse Walker, *Early Tasmania - Papers Read before the Royal Society of Tasmania During the Years 1888 to 1899* (Hobart: T.J. Hughes, 1973). P.22

difference to Tasmania's viticultural history. Again, grape vines were among the first plantings, with vines soon trialled on Government farms.³²

Dr Don Martin, in a paper entitled *Early Tasmanian Horticulture*, presented to the Royal Society of Tasmania in 1976³³, suggests that Tasmanian horticulture passed through three major developmental phases; the first decade saw the kitchen garden phase, solely concerned with edible foods for survival, while the second decade was the cottage garden phase, with the development of more permanent dwelling and their associated gardens, again with the emphasis on useful plants.

The next twenty years, from the mid 1820s to the mid 1840s, Martin describes as the "scientific phase", with the establishment of the Government Gardens as an important experimental plant introduction centre and the establishment of several commercial nurseries in both north and south.

Certainly viticulture was seen as an essential component of colonisation. Henderson, in his model of establishing a colony, suggests that in the fifth year "attention would be paid to the orchard, the vinery and to tobacco."³⁴

In her doctoral thesis³⁵, Julie McIntyre suggests that early viticulture was motivated by more than just self sufficiency. She argues that wine growing was seen by many as embodying "beneficial, even transformative, cultural value³⁶", and that "British migrants sought to produce grape wine to 'civilize' their 'savage' social and physical surrounds through the creation of a potential staple crop with status or 'distinction' within empire³⁷."

David Dunstan makes the same point in "Better than Pommard" suggesting that, as the vine

³² McIntyre, "A "Civilized" Drink and A "Civilizing" Industry: Wine Growing and Cultural Imagining in Colonial New South Wales". P.68

³³ Don Martin, "Early Tasmanian Horticulture," (Hobart: Address to a meeting of the Royal Society of Tasmania, Dec. 7, 1976).pp. 1-2

³⁴ John Henderson, *Observations on the Colonies of New South Wales and Van Dieme's Land* (Adelaide: Libraries Board of South Australia, 1965).

³⁵ McIntyre, "A "Civilized" Drink and A "Civilizing" Industry: Wine Growing and Cultural Imagining in Colonial New South Wales".

³⁶ Ibid. abstract

³⁷ Ibid. p.21

was seen as “a symbol of the ‘civilisation’ of settled societies”, viticulture was part of the civilizing process of the colony of Victoria³⁸.

To take this one step further, the historically strong association between wine and the upper echelons of society, described more fully in Chapter 4, must have made viticulture an attractive pursuit for settlers with social aspirations, and this may have been part of the motivation of Tasmania’s earliest vignerons. As A.D. Francis points out in *The Wine Trade*, in the home country, “wine was not much drunk except by people of considerable social pretensions and on occasions of special festivity³⁹.” In this context there is a real connection between the 19th century settler seeking to improve his prestige and social standing through cultivation of a vineyard and the modern concept of vineyards as a “vanity project”, dealt with more fully in Chapter 11.

While there is no direct evidence of the first vines to arrive in the colony, it is reasonable to assume that it was early in the establishment of the colony, as in 1823 the Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen’s Land Advertiser reported that grapes were amongst the most productive fruits in the colony⁴⁰, and the following year in the same paper that:

*The produce of grapes this year is expected to be greater than has been known since the formation of the Colony*⁴¹

Beer and wine corks were advertised for sale⁴² and there was doubtless wine being produced in the colony from various kinds of fruit. The Rev. Robert Knopwood, one of the colony’s earliest gardeners was, by 1820, inviting friends to partake of his fruit and wine.⁴³ The first newspaper mention of wine made in the colony occurs in the Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen’s Land Advertiser in 1824:

RASPBERRY WINE.- The cultivation of that pleasant fruit the raspberry has been so much attended to within the last two years, that we now find

³⁸ David Dunstan, *Better Than Pommard-a History of Wine in Victoria* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1994). P.XIII

³⁹ A.D. Francis, *The Wine Trade* (London: A & C Black, 1972). P.302

⁴⁰ "Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser," 1821-1825. 13 December, 1823 p.1

⁴¹ Ibid. 23 January, 1824, p.2

⁴² Ibid. 15 February, 1823, p.4

⁴³ Sharon Morgan, *Land Settlement in Early Tasmania- Creating an Antipodean England* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1992). P.93

*several settlers have this season made from one to two hundred gallons of wine each,- In moist ground, partly sheltered from the sun, in the garden of a Gentleman of New Town, the raspberry tree has produced fruit this year for eight or ten weeks.*⁴⁴

The “gentleman of New Town” may well have been Bartholomew Broughton of Prospect Farm, who advertised in the same year:

*FOR SALE, at Prospect Farm, New Town.....about sixty dozen of Raspberry and Currant wine, made from last year's Fruit*⁴⁵

By this time, Broughton had certainly planted Tasmania's first vineyard⁴⁶, and in 1827 he advertised:

*FOR SALE, at MR BROUGHTON'S at Newtown, 200 Gallons of GRAPE WINE, made in imitation of Champagne, from the last year's Grapes, in Casks of 20 Gallons each; also, between 2 and 3 cwt. of RASPBERRY JAM, made from this Year's Fruit.
Wanted to Purchase from 50 to 60 Dozen of Wine Bottles*⁴⁷

The wine was made from the 1826 vintage, and as grape vines require about three years to come into production, we can assume the planting date as around 1823.

Bartholomew Broughton arrived in Hobart Town as a convict on the 10th of January, 1820 on board the *Dromedary*. He had been tried and convicted of embezzlement in London in 1819 and sentenced to transportation. The Times of London reported:

*Feb. 26, 1819. Bartholomew Broughton, an officer in His Majesty's navy, was brought before Mr. Alderman Cox, as sitting alderman, charged with felony in stealing bank notes and other property at the White Horse, Fetter Lane, and the Swan with Two Necks, Lads Lane, where he had at different times slept.*⁴⁸

He was apparently of good family and quite well connected⁴⁹ although neither Don Martin⁵⁰ nor I have found any evidence of his holding a naval commission - certainly he

⁴⁴ "Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser." 13 February, 1823, p.3

⁴⁵ Ibid. 2 July, 1824, p. 7

⁴⁶ The number of vineyards in early Van Diemen's Land clearly depends on our definition of a vineyard- for the purpose of this work, we will define a vineyard as “a plantation of at least 100 grape vines”

⁴⁷ *Colonial Times and Tasmanian Advertiser*, (Hobart). 16 February, 1827, p.4

⁴⁸ "Magistrate Court Hearings," *The Times*. London, 13 March, 1819

⁴⁹ His obituary in the Hobart Town Courier, 5 July, 1828 states “his relations are of the highest respectability in England”

was an energetic and enterprising man who earned his ticket-of-leave in 1822⁵¹ and set out to make his fortune in Van Diemen's Land.

Within 18 months of his arrival he had purchased a house in Bridge Street and was both employed as treasurer of the Police Fund and a clerk in the Naval Office. He was also the proprietor of a general store in Liverpool Street⁵². In March, and was advertising goods in the Hobart Town Gazette:⁵³

Early in his time in Van Diemen's Land, Broughton formed an association with the wealthy Luttrell family, probably through some English connection. Edward Luttrell was the Colonial Surgeon and his son Alfred the owner of *Prospect Farm* in New Town, one of 12 100 acre allotments on the New Town Rivulet, granted to the first free settlers, who arrived in 1804.

Broughton must have strained this family friendship when he met Edward's second daughter Malvina Hobson, who had arrived in Hobart Town from Sydney in 1821 with her husband Edward and two children. By October, 1823, she had left her husband and children and was living with Broughton at Prospect Farm. Broughton was charged with *Harbouring in his dwelling house and cohabiting with Mrs Hobson*⁵⁴

It is not clear how Broughton acquired *Prospect Farm*, which was to be the site of the colony's first vineyard. Martin⁵⁵ has him purchasing the property from Alfred Luttrell in October 1824 "on a bond of 5000 pounds", but he clearly had an association with *Prospect Farm* earlier than this as he was given as the contact person in two advertisements offering *Prospect Farm* for sale or lease in April and October, 1823⁵⁶⁵⁷ However it was acquired, Don Martin points out the unlikely nature of the transaction:

⁵⁰ Don Martin, "Some Early Tasmanian Viticulturalists- 1820-1850," (Hobart: 1994).

⁵¹ "Nsw Settlers and Convict Lists, National Archives," (Canberra: 1787-1834). HO 10/18

⁵² Martin, "Early Tasmanian Horticulture." P.3

⁵³ "Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser." 23 March, 1822. A similar ad appeared in the Gazette on 29 December 1821.

⁵⁴ "Convicts Conduct Book, Tasmanian Archive Office," (Hobart: 1824).CON31-1-1 00155

⁵⁵ ———, "Some Early Tasmanian Viticulturalists- 1820-1850."p.3

⁵⁶ "Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser." 12 April, 1823, p.2

⁵⁷ Ibid. 25 October, 1823

It appears, on the surface, extraordinary that the aristocratic Luttrells (Edward was the grandson of an Earl) would have trusted Broughton (a convict embezzler; he was not pardoned until 1825) with such a vast sum (probably \$200,000 equivalent now) even if his house in Bridge Street (which appeared in Edward Luttrell's will) was part of the deal.⁵⁸

Broughton appears to have developed the property extensively over the years 1823 to 1828 with a thriving market garden supplying the Goal and Hospital⁵⁹ and selling directly to the public from a cottage in Brisbane Street⁶⁰, an orchard and a vineyard. For an ex convict with social aspirations, the cachet of vigneron must have been attractive to Broughton, and part of his motivation for planting the vineyard. That there is no mention of a vineyard in the October, 1823 property advertisement cited above casts some doubt on the planting date, but certainly it could not have been later than 1824, with wine produced from 2 year old vines in 1826.⁶¹ We also have no information on the source of the vines. It is possible that they would have come from Sydney, where viticulture was established. Broughton had been in Sydney as a convict in the first half of 1820⁶² and may have had contacts there. Another interesting connection is Gregory Blaxland, the pioneer NSW viticulturist who made the first commercial quantities of wine in Australia from his *Brush Farm* property in Sydney in 1816.⁶³ Blaxland visited Hobart in July, 1824 and inserted this advertisement in the Hobart Town Gazette

WANTED, a Vine dresser, who has worked in the Vineyards on the Continent, to take the Management of a Vineyard at Port Jackson; he must understand the planting, pruning, training of the Vine, and the Management of a Vineyard in all its Branches.- Liberal encouragement will be given.- Apply to Mr G. BLAXLAND at Mr Stodart's Hotel, Hobart Town. A character will be required.⁶⁴

Blaxland may have met Broughton during his stay and may even have brought cuttings with him. Perhaps a more likely source of the planting material would have been the Government Gardens, established by Governor Sorell in 1818 on the site of the present

⁵⁸ ———, "Some Early Tasmanian Viticulturalists- 1820-1850."

⁵⁹ *Colonial Times and Tasmanian Advertiser*. June 30, 1826, p.3

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 15 December, 1826- Broughton was selling fresh vegetables and fruit from his cottage in Brisbane Street

⁶¹ If Broughton had secured rooted vines, rather than cuttings, an 1824 date would be possible.

⁶² Martin, "Some Early Tasmanian Viticulturalists- 1820-1850." p.3

⁶³ Gent, *Mixed Dozen - the Story of Australian Winemaking since 1788*.

⁶⁴ "Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser." 16 July, 1824, p.9

Hobart Botanical Gardens. When the first Catalogue of Plants was published in 1857, there were 29 varieties of grape listed⁶⁵ (Appendix C) and it seems likely that grape vines were introduced early in the Garden's history, with plants or cuttings sent from Sydney or from the Cape.

Whatever the source of the vines, Broughton's vineyard was much admired by a "gentleman from the Cape" in 1827:

GRAPES- We have been informed by a Gentleman who has just come from the Cape, which is considered a wine country, that the grapes in this Colony grow far more luxuriantly than they do in that; and expressed his great surprise at seeing so fine a vineyard as at Mr Broughton's, at New-town.- We should be happy to see the grape generally in cultivation. Mr Broughton has several hundred gallons of Tasmanian wine, part of which he intends to send home, to the Society of Arts and Sciences, so soon as he can procure the Lieutenant Governor's certificate of its being the produce and manufacture of this Colony⁶⁶

The following week, Broughton offered his 1826 vintage wines for sale:

FOR SALE, at MR BROUGHTON's at New-town, 200 Gallons of GRAPE WINE, made in imitation of Champaigne (sic), from the last year's Grapes, in Casks of 20 gallons each⁶⁷

It is not clear how Broughton was able to offer "champaigne", a sparkling wine, in wooden casks, (although, from the following report, it is clear that the wine was also sold in bottles) but the wine was well received. The Colonial Times in the following week, published opinions from various qualified wine tasters:

TASMANIAN WINE – The first attempt to make wine from the grapes in this Colony, to any extent, has been made by Mr. Broughton of Prospect, New-town. Our readers will notice his advertisement in last week's paper. Several Gentlemen, among whom are Mr. Colonial Secretary Burnett, Dr Sherwin, Mr. Bryant, the Wine Merchant, and several others, have tasted this wine and all pronounce it very little inferior to Champaigne; and have recommended him to distribute the produce of one Vintage throughout the two Colonies, and in England, in order that various opinions might be formed upon it. Dr. Sherwin, who tasted Mr. Blaxland's Australian wine, for which he obtained the Gold Medal from the Society of Arts⁶⁸, declared,

⁶⁵ Royal Society of Tasmania, *Catalogue of Plants at the Royal Society's Gardens, Queen's Park, Hobart Town* (Hobart: 1857). P.22

⁶⁶ *Colonial Times and Tasmanian Advertiser*. 9 February, 1827, p.3

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 16 February, 1827 p4

⁶⁸ This is probably either error or exaggeration- Blaxland's wine won a Silver Medal in London in 1823- his Gold Medal from the Society of the Arts was won in 1828, a year after Broughton's wine was released.

that Mr. Broughton's is as far superior, as fine Port to Blackstrap⁶⁹. Mr. Burnett, who has taken several dozen for his own table, and Mr. Bryant, both agree that it is as fine new wine as either of them has drunk for these past five years. The latter Gentleman who, from his long experience in the wine trade, may be considered a competent judge, speaks highly of its flavour, which, he says, other wines frequently lose in the process of refining, by the admixture of noxious ingredients.⁷⁰

Broughton took their advice and the following month sent samples of his wine to England on the *Hugh Crawford*.⁷¹

While he had been developing *Prospect Farm*, life had not been easy for Bartholomew Broughton. As clerk to Dr. Bromley, Naval Officer and Treasurer of the Colonial Fund, he became involved in the investigation and subsequent trial of Dr. Bromley for embezzlement. In 1824 Governor Arthur, a man of “inflexible and energetic disposition⁷²”, with an “embarrassing habit of closely investigating the work of all his officers”⁷³ succeeded Governor Sorell. A deficiency in the public accounts had been discovered and reported to Sorell, who took no action, but Arthur was a much more thorough administrator. He investigated and reported to Earl Bathurst in London a deficiency of £4,665 - while Bromley was ultimately responsible, Arthur was deeply suspicious of Broughton's role in the affair, asking how a clerk could afford

not only to live expensively but to purchase an Estate and erect a good house upon it with every comfort and convenience and the property which the Board has ascertained to be in his possession exceeds 3,000 pounds.⁷⁴

Broughton was subsequently charged with embezzlement and tried over two days in October, 1826. Dr. Bromley's habit of not keeping any books or accounts made the charge impossible to prove and Broughton was found not guilty after a jury retirement of just five minutes⁷⁵. That Broughton was able to retain Joseph Tice Gellibrand, a former

⁶⁹ Dark, sweet and rough red wine from the Douro region of Portugal, popular in England.

⁷⁰ *Colonial Times and Tasmanian Advertiser*. 23 February, 1827

⁷¹ The Hobart Town Gazette of March 24, 1827 reports this as “two casks samples of colonial wine” The Colonial Times of 23 March, 1827 records “one case and one cask of Colonial wine, shipped by B. Broughton. The latter appears to be correct.

⁷² John West, "The History of Tasmania," (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1971). P. 79

⁷³ M.C.I. Levy, *Governor George Arthur: A Colonial Benevolent Despot* (Melbourne: Georgian House, 1953). P. 306

⁷⁴ Watson, *Historical Records of Australia*. I/IX

⁷⁵ "Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser." 21 October, 1826, p.4

Attorney General who had been dismissed by Governor Arthur, as his Counsel, did not hurt his case. The verdict seems to have been based on “not proven” rather than “innocent” and certainly Arthur added to his long list of grievances against Gellibrand that he secured Broughton’s acquittal, while knowing, as Attorney General at the time, that he was guilty.⁷⁶

Interestingly, Gellibrand may have gone on to establish his own vineyard on the family property at South Arm. Gellibrand died in 1837 and the property was advertised for sale in 1844 by his son T.L. Gellibrand. The advertisement stated that “the vinery, the very best in the island, about 2 acres, is in full bearing.”⁷⁷

In the mean time a reply to Arthur’s letter had come from Earl Bathurst, addressed to Governor Darling in Sydney, informing him that Broughton’s Conditional Emancipation

*has not been confirmed by His Majesty, as, taking into consideration the charges which have in a late instance been preferred against him, and the offence for which he was originally transported, it is deemed that he is an object altogether undeserving of such an indulgence.*⁷⁸

Whether because of Broughton’s acquittal, his good connections or sheer luck, Darling appears to have taken no action and Broughton retained his Certificate of Emancipation granted in 1824.

In 1828, Broughton had enough fruit to offer grapes for sale:

GRAPES FOR WINE

*Families desirous of making their own Wine, can be supplied with any quantity of Grapes at Mr. Broughton’s farm, New-town....*⁷⁹

Broughton’s viticultural success was cut short by his premature death on July 21, 1828, aged 32. His obituary was written by his good friend and ally through his many troubles, Andrew Bent, proprietor of the Hobart Town Gazette. Bent was also trustee of his Estate.

Died, -- At his residence, New-town, on Saturday evening, the 21st instant, much esteemed, Mr. B. Broughton, at the early age of thirty-two.

⁷⁶ Levy, *Governor George Arthur: A Colonial Benevolent Despot*. P.71

⁷⁷ *Hobart Town Courier*, (Hobart: 1827-1839). 17 December, 1844, p.3

⁷⁸ Watson, *Historical Records of Australia*. I/IX pp. 9-10

⁷⁹ *Hobart Town Courier*. 29 March, 1828 p.1

This gentleman had suffered for several years under a pulmonary affection (sic) having ruptured a blood-vessel early in 1824, and a recurrence of which finally terminated his mortal career. He was sanguine and highly persevering in every measure in which he engaged, and it may truly be said he fell a sacrifice to too great irritability. His elegant and productive farm at New Town, with its primitive Tasmanian vineyard, was not on a sufficient scale for his enterprising views; and hence his purchase (only completed a few days before his death of the beautiful estate of Woodlands, Cross Marsh), which proved too great a stimulus for his debilitated constitution. His funeral took place on Thursday, and he was deposited in the vault of the late Dr. Luttrell, Colonial Surgeon, to whose family he has bequeathed the whole of his property. His relations are of the highest respectability in England, and his whole conduct was ever marked by kindness and benevolence.⁸⁰

He left his “wife” Malvina⁸¹ a lifelong interest in the New-town property and his relationship with the Luttrell family seems to have been a lasting one, as Malvina’s mother Martha had lived with them after Edward Luttrell’s death⁸² and Broughton was buried in the Luttrell family vault.

This was the first blow of ill luck suffered by Tasmania’s fledgling wine industry. Broughton was a young man of energy and initiative who had the experience of three vintages behind him and may well have gone on to make a long term success of the vineyard, providing encouragement, expertise and planting material to other aspiring vignerons.

As a footnote, six months after Broughton’s death, a letter addressed to him was published in the Colonial Times. It was written by Mr G. Lingham, wine merchant of London, who had tasted the wine sent by Broughton from Hobart in March, 1827:

“Dear Sir, - I went with your much respected father some time back, to inspect and taste at the London Docks a cask of wine, and some stone bottles of wine which you had shipped him as a specimen of the produce of your Settlement. I am sorry to say, that in consequence of the wine having been put into the bottles in too early a stage, that the fermentation, added to the insufficiency of the corks, had caused all the wine to escape, excepting about a wine glass in one bottle; but, from that small quantity,

⁸⁰ "Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser." 23 July, 1828, p.2

⁸¹ There is no evidence that they were ever formally married.

⁸² Martin, "Some Early Tasmanian Viticulturalists- 1820-1850." P. 5

under all its disadvantages, I feel no hesitation in pronouncing the wine good. The cask had labored under the same effects, but which I took home, added a small quantity of brandy, then fined and bottled it, and upon the whole it turned out tolerably well. If it is your intention to prosecute the growth of wine, I beg to mention a few directions, which you will find useful in your future operations, and tend to make your wine of much superior quality than that you have already shipped.”⁸³

Mr. Lingham goes on to provide advice on fermentation, racking, fining and the addition of brandy, recommending five gallons to the pipe.⁸⁴ Unaware of Broughton’s death, he encourages his viticultural endeavours and suggests exchanging colonial wine for rum and porter in future transactions.

The only serious rivals to Broughton as Tasmania’s first viticulturist are William Effingham Lawrence and Dr. James Murdoch. Lawrence arrived in Launceston in his own vessel the *Lord Liverpool* on the 19th of February, 1823, believed to be the first arrival at Port Dalrymple direct from England.⁸⁵

In 1909, Henry Button in *Flotsam and Jetsam*, describing the lands granted to Lawrence, writes that Lawrence was granted 30 acres along the line of what is now Margaret Street, Launceston

The latter block he fenced in, and planted two acres of it as a vineyard, but the inhabitants, thinking it an encroachment on their rights, petitioned Lieut. Governor Sorell on the subject, and the land was resumed by the Crown⁸⁶

Bethell in *The Story of Port Dalrymple* also makes two references to Lawrence experimenting with grapes⁸⁷. It is difficult to find contemporary evidence as the vineyard probably pre-dates Launceston’s first newspaper, the *Tasmanian and Port Dalrymple Advertiser* which was first published in January, 1826⁸⁸. Sorell’s inward and outward

⁸³ *Colonial Times and Tasmanian Advertiser*. 9 January, 1829 p.3

⁸⁴ A pipe was a wooden cask holding approximately 550 litres or 145 gallons

⁸⁵ "Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser." 22 February, 1823, p.2

⁸⁶ Henry Button, *Flotsam and Jetsam* (Hobart: Simpkins, Birchall & Co, 1909). P.395

⁸⁷ L.S. Bethell, *The Story of Port Dalrymple* (Hobart: Blubber Head Press, 1980). Pp. 111 & 132

⁸⁸ Patricia Ratcliff, *The Usefulness of John West* (Launceston: The Albernian Press, 2003). P. 45

correspondence records in the Archives of Tasmania make no mention of the petition or of Sorell's response.

At all events, if a vineyard existed, it was shortlived, and disappeared before producing a crop.

Back in the south, Dr James Murdoch planted wine grapes at *Paradise Farm* in Risdon Vale (Cambridge) and in 1827 was offering:

TO GENTLEMEN AND GARDENERS

FINE Hosby black Mulberry Plants, propagated by J. Mulcock, late Gardener to A.W.H. Humphrey, Esq. now in the employment of Dr. Murdoch, Paradise Farm, Risdon Creek.

*Also a number of Black Cluster Vine Plants, superior to any other for ripening in the island.*⁸⁹

These vines would have been propagated from cuttings taken in 1826, so, if taken from vines on the property, suggests a planting date for the original vines no later than 1824. It is of course possible that they were surplus plants from the original vineyard planting, propagated by Murdoch's gardener from cuttings obtained elsewhere (possibly Broughton) and that the vineyard was planted in 1827.

Black cluster is generally regarded as a synonym for the Burgundy grape, so almost certainly a type of pinot noir. Martin⁹⁰ identifies black cluster as an English clone of pinot noir. The Burgundy grape was being grown in NSW by 1813, and was one of the two varieties grown by Blaxland at *Brush Farm*⁹¹, so cuttings may well have found their way to Van Diemen's Land. Whether by accident or design, early viticulturists had found the red grape variety best suited to this state, and the claim made in the advertisement "superior to any other for ripening in the island" has been vindicated by sixty years of experience in the modern Tasmanian wine industry.

⁸⁹ *Hobart Town Gazette*, (Hobart: 1825-1827). 1 September 1827, P. 3

⁹⁰ Martin, "Some Early Tasmanian Viticulturalists- 1820-1850." P.2

⁹¹ Beeston, *Concise History of Australian Wine*. P.13

Dr. James Murdoch was an enterprising and innovative medico who arrived in Van Diemen's Land in 1822 and soon had a productive garden producing medicinal herbs and aromatic plants for perfumery⁹². He pioneered the production of opium in Tasmania and the vineyard at *Paradise Farm* may have been part of this medicinal pattern as wine was generally regarded as having health giving properties and frequently prescribed for patients in hospitals.

In his doctoral thesis⁹³, Dr Philip Norrie documents a 5000 year history of wine used medicinally, and suggests a number of reasons why doctors feature so prominently in the early history of Australian viticulture. As well educated people of high social standing, they were more likely to be familiar with good quality wine, and therefore less likely to be satisfied with the inferior Cape wines available in the colony. They were also acutely aware of the damage to health caused by spirit drinking in the colony, as saw wine as a wholesome alternative to that addiction. More importantly, Norrie points out that

*wine had a great medical following for use as a food source, a tonic, and a source of iron for anaemic patients and as a tranquilliser*⁹⁴

In fact, in 1828, the zealous Governor Arthur queried the issuing of 17 dozen bottles of wine to patients at the Colonial Hospital. The Colonial Surgeon replied:

With regard to the expenditure of the 17 dozen of wine since the 25th December last I beg leave to state that the demand has been great in consequence of their having been more debilitated, infirm patients and cases requiring the administration of wine during the last year.

J. Scott

Colonial Surgeon

Mr. Scott goes on to detail 35 patients and their ailments, with the amounts of wine administered.⁹⁵

⁹² A. Rand, "James Murdoch," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography- Online edition* (ANU, 1967).

⁹³ Dr Philip Norrie, "Wine and Health through the Ages with Special Reference to Australia" (University of Western Sydney, 2005).

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* p.120

In 1825, George Gunning was establishing a vineyard in the Coal Valley. Gunning was an army officer who arrived in Van Diemen's Land from Sydney in 1810 and was granted 44 acres near Richmond. He was an enterprising farmer whose diligence was rewarded by Lieutenant Governor Arthur with further land grants which amounted to a total holding of 4000 acres by the mid 1820s.⁹⁶

In June, 1826 he wrote to Lieutenant Governor Arthur, applying for a Premium offered to successful hop growers, saying that the money would make possible further exertions including

*the enlargement of a vineyard, last year commenced; of the success of which I entertain the most sanguine hopes from the profusion of grapes (according to the quantity of vines) produced this season in my garden, which ripened so well as to enable me to make a small cask of wine*⁹⁷

His only remaining daughter died in February 1828 and a distraught Gunning decided to return to England, with the fruit of his young vineyard unharvested. In April, he advertised Weston Villa for sale or lease:

*.....The Garden is laid out with the greatest care, containing three acres, and filled with the best Fruit Trees and Vines. Upon the latter, there are now 2000lbs. of Grapes, perfectly ripe and ready for pressing into Wine.*⁹⁸

The property failed to sell or lease and Gunning remained at Weston Villa, but seems to have lacked the energy and enthusiasm that characterised his earlier agricultural ventures. There is no information about the fate of the vineyard. It may have been a casualty of a fire in 1834 which destroyed Gunning's crops and wheat stacks, and eventually forced him to sell the property, and retire to Hobart⁹⁹.

⁹⁵ Eustace Fitzsymonds, *A Looking-Glass for Tasmania- Letters, Petitions and Other Manuscripts Relating to Van Diemen's Land 1808-1845* (Adelaide: Sullivan's Cove, 1980). Pp. 142-143

⁹⁶ F.C. Green, "George Weston Gunning," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography- Online edition* (ANU, 1966).

⁹⁷ Fitzsymonds, *A Looking-Glass for Tasmania- Letters, Petitions and Other Manuscripts Relating to Van Diemen's Land 1808-1845*. P.14

⁹⁸ *Colonial Times*, (Hobart: 1828-1857). P. 1

⁹⁹ Green, "George Weston Gunning." *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.1, (Melbourne University Press, 1966) p.494

Gunning's 1826 letter refers to the establishment of the vineyard in the previous year and it apparently carried a full crop in 1828, so an establishment date of 1825 seems well supported. This was yet another promising vineyard project cut short by misadventure. It is however significant that there appeared to be little enthusiasm for vineyards from prospective buyers, although for both the Gunning and Broughton properties the vineyard would have been a relatively minor part of the rural package offered.

Augustus Prinsep in 1833 had lodging in a New-town property where "300 gallons of very tolerable wine were made one year" and this was probably Broughton's vineyard, by this time owned by Captain Charles Swanston. He writes of a neighbouring property owned by a brewer, with the "best garden in the colony" and where "his vines are superseding the vineyard in our garden, which was planted many years before his"¹⁰⁰. This was almost certainly George Gatehouse's property in New-town and illustrates that most gentlemen's estates would have had grape vines at this time, either outdoor or indoor. When Gatehouse died in 1839, the property was advertised with a "hothouse, recently renovated, supplied with the most choice plants and grape vines".¹⁰¹

Another early vineyard, and the first productive vineyard in the north of the state, was established by John Smith at *Marchington*, at Cocked Hat Hill, Breadalbane in 1828. Smith, with his wife and young son, emigrated from Northumberland to Sydney in 1816, and moved to Launceston in 1822, with a grant of 500 acres at Breadalbane. Smith was said to be the illegitimate son of King George IV, the result of his union with a Catholic widow, Maria Fitzherbert.¹⁰²

The vineyard at *Marchington* appears to have been an initiative of William Davidson, a skilled and experienced gardener from Northumberland, who arrived in Hobart Town in September 1827 with "800 trees, 200 grape vines, seeds, cuttings and letters of

¹⁰⁰ Augustus Prinsep, *The Journal of a Voyage from Calcutta to Van Diemen's Land: Comprising a Description of That Colony During a Six Month's Residence / from Original Letters Selected by Mrs. Augustus Prinsep* (London: Smith, Elder, 1833).

¹⁰¹ *Colonial Times*. 19 February, 1939, p.3

¹⁰² Family history compiled by James Smith, obtained from the present owner of Marchington, Robert Knott.

introduction in Sydney”.¹⁰³ Davidson knew John Smith, a fellow Northumbrian, and travelled to Launceston, where he planted his trees, vines and cuttings at *Marchington* between January and June 1828. He was then offered and accepted the position as the first Superintendent of the Botanic Gardens in Hobart, a position which he held with distinction from 1829 to 1834.¹⁰⁴

In 1842 *Marchington* was offered for sale and the description included:

*There is also one of the best Vineyards in the colony on this Estate; it has produced upwards of five tons of grapes this year*¹⁰⁵

The sale was apparently unsuccessful and John Smith lived at *Marchington* until his death in 1853.

Throughout the 1820s, hopes were held for viticulture as a potential export industry for the fledgling Colony. In May, 1826, the *Colonial Times* writes:

*GRAPES- Our little annual publication the Tasmanian Almanack says, that, ‘the produce of grapes in this country is wonderfully great, and exceedingly fine in quality’- This remark is fully borne out this season; for we may safely assert, that our vines were never before known to bear fruit of a finer quality or in greater abundance. We know one Gentleman who has such an abundant crop, that he expects to be enabled to manufacture at least three pipes of wine for his own use. It is now evident, as is stated in the Almanack, that “this fruit will no doubt in the course of a few years, be of considerable benefit to the colony, not only to supply wines for our own consumption, but for exportation.”*¹⁰⁶

James Busby’s *Treatise on the Culture of the Vine* went on sale in Hobart in July 1825 and the *Colonial Times* remarked:

¹⁰³ Marcus Hurburgh, *The Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens- a History in Stone, Soil and Superintendents* (Hobart: Shearwater Press, 1986). P.11

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* p.13

¹⁰⁵ *Hobart Town Courier*. 20 May, 1842, p.1

¹⁰⁶ *Colonial Times and Tasmanian Advertiser*. 5 May, 1826 P.2

*Dr Busby's Pamphlet on the culture of the Grape Vine, has given a stimulus to wine speculators, which is expected to be productive of the most beneficial results.*¹⁰⁷

In 1827 the Courier was dispensing viticultural advice:

*There is not a doubt but that the grape vine will produce good crops in this island, if it be properly trained.*¹⁰⁸

The article goes on to recommend pruning the vine at the end of February 'for some years' to 'compel the plant to commence the process for the ensuing crop earlier than it otherwise would, and consequently gives it full time to ripen its fruit the following summer. If this practice is followed "there is not a doubt but large and abundant crops of rich grapes will be regularly obtained".

In the same year the Colonial Times advocates viticulture and wine making

*affording an opportunity of keeping money in the Colony, now sent to the Dutch Colonists at the Cape*¹⁰⁹

There is no doubt that, by the end of the 1820s, grapes were widely planted across the island. The Colonial Times, in an article promoting agriculture and country life in Van Diemen's Land, writes:

*Poultry, eggs, butter and vegetables, considered luxuries in town, are there in profusion; and if they have not the produce of the grape from their own vineyards, or cyder from their own orchards (which most of them have), they at least have the essence of malt and hops*¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 3 March, 1826 p.3

¹⁰⁸ *Hobart Town Courier*. 24 July, 1829 pp.2-3

¹⁰⁹ *Colonial Times and Tasmanian Advertiser*. 27 April, 1827, p.3

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 27 April, 1827, p10

And the same paper was advocating a tax on wine imported from the Cape, suggesting that it was inhibiting the planting of vineyards in the colony¹¹¹.

So, by the end of the decade, optimism was high, and the stage appeared to be set for an expansion of viticulture in the new Colony.

¹¹¹ *Colonial Times*. 25 September 1829, p.4

CHAPTER 2

“A COUNTRY SO EMINENTLY SUITED TO VITICULTURE”

The decade from 1830 to 1840 was a decade of expansion in Van Diemen’s Land. The population was boosted by 10,000 free settlers and almost 20,000 convicts and the acreage cultivated rose from 55,976 in 1830 to 124,103 in 1840 as settlers took up the remaining lands in the Derwent and Tamar Valleys¹¹². Investment funds flowed in and a mixed farming economy developed, so, given that vineyards already existed in the north and south of the state by 1830, it is surprising to see such little evidence of new vineyards over that 10 year period. The principal reason was probably that Van Diemen’s Land immigration was almost exclusively from Great Britain, a country with no tradition of wine making, or wine drinking for that matter. The colony received very few immigrants (less than one percent¹¹³) from the wine making countries of Europe, and so had almost no settlers with any knowledge of viticulture or winemaking.

After Bartholomew Broughton’s death, winemaking ceased at Prospect Farm as the lease of the property dragged on, complicated by a claim from Broughton’s sister in England, Miss C.J. Broughton, published in the Colonial Times in 1830.¹¹⁴ The fact that Broughton and Malvina had probably never formally married may have also posed legal problems.

The property was first advertised for lease in July, 1828:

TO BE LET, that most desirable Estate, late the property of Mr. B. Broughton, deceased, containing 150 acres.....

.....the Garden is the finest in the Island, containing about five Acres, in the highest state of cultivation, and abundantly stocked with the finest

¹¹² Morgan, *Land Settlement in Early Tasmania- Creating an Antipodean England*. P.30

¹¹³ Wray Vamplew (ed), *Australians- Historical Statistics* (Sydney: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon, 1987).

¹¹⁴ *Colonial Times*.30 July, 1830 p.1

*Fruit Trees of every description, amongst which is the celebrated Vineyard, producing several hundred Gallons of Wine annually.*¹¹⁵

Malvina was obviously still in residence, as in August an advertisement offered “TO be LET, Furnished, one half of the premises belonging to the late Mr. BARTHOLOMEW BROUGHTON.....”¹¹⁶

Some interest was shown by a new arrival:

*We have to congratulate the Colony upon the arrival of another practical Brewer and Maltster, MR. FERGUSSON, a passenger per the Comet. He is in treaty for the premises of the late MR BROUGHTON, at New-town, where he purposes carrying on his operations.*¹¹⁷

But no resolution was arrived at and the 1929 vintage was offered to the public:

*The public can be furnished with RIPE GRAPES and Quinces, at a moderate price, at Prospect Farm, New-town*¹¹⁸

With the Hobart Town Almanack for 1829 recording that:

*Since the death of Mr Broughton, the making of wine has been abandoned.*¹¹⁹

Prospect Farm was advertised for lease repeatedly from June, 1829 to January, 1830 without success, then in May, 1830 an advertisement appeared claiming Broughton’s sister, Miss C.J. Broughton as the Right Heir at Law to her brother’s Estate and offering to dispose of her interest.¹²⁰

The eventual buyer, Captain Charles Swanston, took over the property in 1830, but did not secure a title until 1833, after buying out Malvina’s interest for 2000 pounds.¹²¹

¹¹⁵ Ibid. 18 July, 1828, p.1

¹¹⁶ Ibid. 15 August, 1828, p.1

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 30 January, 1829

¹¹⁸ *Hobart Town Courier*. 18 April, 1829

¹¹⁹ James Ross, *Hobart Town Almanack for 1829* (Hobart: 1829). P.145

¹²⁰ *Colonial Times*. 10 July, 1830, p.1

¹²¹ Martin, "Some Early Tasmanian Viticulturalists- 1820-1850." P.6

Charles Swanston arrived in Hobart Town on January 4, 1829, with his wife and family, on leave from his army posting in India. He brought some 10,000 pounds capital with him and soon after his arrival bought *Fenton Forest* on the River Styx.¹²²

In November, 1831, Swanston was appointed managing director of the Derwent Bank, a position he was to hold until the failure of the Bank in 1850. While holding that position he operated as an import and export agent, dealing in tea, rum and wool, and in 1835, joined the Port Philip Association formed by John Batman to found a colony in Victoria.¹²³

Given this level of activity, you would hardly expect Swanston to give his small vineyard a high priority, and there is no mention of it until 1841, although wine was presumably made each year. In July, 1841 he is reported in the *Courier*”

*I have discovered that my vineyards, part of the estate of 35 acres, are likely to turn out more valuable than I had expected. Last year I made 20 hogsheads of wine, this year I hope to make 30 and, in 5 or 6 years, I should think yield 100. For the whole I have declined of 10 pounds per hogshead. The reds I value at twice that sum.*¹²⁴

This would certainly imply that Swanston was enlarging the vineyard. 20 hogsheads of wine equate to about 1300 gallons- probably the produce of 4 to 5 acres at about 250-300 gallons per acre. To be predicting 100 hogsheads- 6,500 gallons- implies an expansion of the vineyard to at least 20 acres.

While there was little viticultural activity in Van Diemen's Land during the 1930s, there were important developments in other states which affected Tasmania. The first, in 1932, was the arrival in Sydney of a huge collection of vine cuttings from France, Luxemburg, Spain and England. They had been collected and sent to Australia by a true giant of the

¹²² Wilfred H. Hudspeth, "The Rise and Fall of Charles Swanston," *Royal Society of Tasmania papers and proceedings* 1948 (1948). P.1

¹²³ Charles Swanston, "Charles Swanston," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography- Online edition* (Melbourne University Press, 1965).

¹²⁴ *Hobart Town Courier*. July 1841

Australian wine industry, James Busby. In August, 1832, the Colonial Times printed this excerpt from the Sydney Morning Herald:

The Lady Harewood has brought to this Colony one of the most valuable importations which has arrived for many year; it being a collection of more than 400 varieties (sic) of vines, with two or more cuttings of each. This important collection has been selected from the Royal garden of Montpellier, from the large collection of Luxemburg at Paris, and from the garden of the Duke of Northumberland; in fact, every country in Europe, and every province of France, has contributed its particular species.....

.....should proper care be taken, these three boxes of plants may in ten years become of many thousand pounds value to the Colony, and the parents of a countless progeny in the Islands of our adjacent areas and in every part of this country.¹²⁵

In fact, Busby had collected no less than 570 varieties, of which 362 were successfully struck at the Botanic Gardens in Sydney¹²⁶.

Busby arrived in Sydney with his father in 1824. He appears to have been the only settler in either colony to have come to Australia with viticulture as his prime goal. He had already made a significant contribution to Van Diemen's Land viticulture with the publication of his *Treatise on the Culture of the Vine*, on sale in the state in 1825. He was appointed principal of the Male Orphan School near Liverpool where he set about establishing an "agricultural institute" which included a vineyard¹²⁷. In 1831 he published his second book, *A Manual of Plain Directions for Planting and Cultivating Vineyards and for Making Wine in New South Wales*, and in the same year set out on a viticultural tour of France and Spain, studying climates, soils, winemaking techniques and of course, collecting cuttings of every wine grape variety he encountered, to establish, in the Sydney Botanic Gardens, what he called "a national collection of vines".¹²⁸ Many of these vine varieties were to find their way from the Busby collection to Tasmania over the next twenty years.

¹²⁵ *Colonial Times*. 11 August, 1832, p. 3

¹²⁶ H.E. Laffer, *The Wine Industry of Australia* (Adelaide: Australian Wine Board, 1949). P.34

¹²⁷ J.W. Davidson, "James Busby 1801-1871," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1966). P.186

¹²⁸ Beeston, *Concise History of Australian Wine*. P.24

Tragically for Australian viticulture, Busby was appointed British Resident in New Zealand, and sailed on 16 October, 1832. From then on, the collection appears to have been largely neglected but its many distributions still became the basis of Australia's vine population.

In 1834, Tasmania played a role in the establishment of the first vineyard in Victoria.

James Henty moved from the Swan River in Western Australia to Launceston in 1831 and his father Thomas joined him there with three more of his sons. Unfortunately they were just too late to take advantage of the free land grant system and instead applied for 20,000 acres at Portland Bay on the mainland coast, opposite Van Diemen's Land.¹²⁹ This claim was rejected by the Colonial Office. Undeterred, one of the sons, Edward Henty, set off for Portland Bay from Launceston on the 13th of October, 1834 in the *Thistle*, and the manifest included "1 cask of grape cuttings"¹³⁰. It was a 34 day journey, arriving on 19 November, and Bassett in the family history tells us:

*Edward went steadily on with the work of creating a homestead and a farm....planting the apple trees and raspberry canes, strawberries, gooseberries and vines sent by his father from Fawkner's Nursery on Windmill Hill.*¹³¹

Nothing is known of the fate of the vineyard, but one of the brothers, James Henty, was to play a further part in Victorian viticulture with a vineyard in the Yarra Valley.¹³² The reference to Fawkner's nursery is also interesting. John Pascoe Fawkner was one of early Tasmania's most colourful figures- son of a convict and an ex convict himself, he became hotelier, baker, newspaper proprietor and owner of a nursery on Windmill Hill in Launceston. He devoted his enormous energy and initiative to all these ventures and Patricia Ratcliff writes:

The reputation which Launceston now enjoys as a garden city rests largely on the early creativity and enterprise of the man who imported seeds,

¹²⁹ Ratcliff, *The Usefulness of John West*. P.41

¹³⁰ Marnie Bassett, *The Hentys: An Australian Colonial Tapestry* (London: O.U.P., 1954). P.295

¹³¹ Ibid. p.312

¹³² Dunstan, *Better Than Pommard-a History of Wine in Victoria*. P.74

*plants and trees from America, Great Britain and the Cape of Good Hope*¹³³

Grape vines would certainly have been amongst the imports and stocked in the nursery.

Fawkner was to become a vigneron in his own right in Victoria and, in 1848, claimed to have made 2000 gallons of wine from a 10 acre vineyard near Flemington.¹³⁴

The other interstate connection in the 1830s concerns the beginnings of the wine industry in South Australia.

John Barton Hack, who has strong claims to being the first South Australian vigneron, arrived in Launceston with his family en route to Adelaide on the *Isabella* on the 5th January, 1837¹³⁵ and spent a month stocking up with equipment, including vine cuttings. He arrived in Adelaide in February, 1837 and in 1838 established *Chichester Gardens* in North Adelaide, where he planted the vines and fruit trees he had brought from Launceston. The following year he transferred 700 vines and 400 fruit trees to a 4,000 acre property in the Adelaide Hills, which he named *Echunga Springs*, making his first wine there in 1843¹³⁶

Both John Reynell and Richard Hamilton may have claims to making wine in South Australia before that date, but it seems very likely that Tasmania supplied the cuttings for the first plantings in both South Australia and Victoria, with Hack in Adelaide in 1838 and Henty in Portland Bay in 1843.

John Reynell also received 500 vines from Tasmania¹³⁷ which he planted at Reynella Farm, 13 miles from Adelaide in 1841¹³⁸. This date seems confirmed by Ebenezer Ward who writes in 1862:

¹³³ Ratcliff, *The Usefulness of John West*. P.43

¹³⁴ Dunstan, *Better Than Pommard-a History of Wine in Victoria*. P.7

¹³⁵ *Hobart Town Courier*. 6 January, 1837

¹³⁶ J. Gilchrist, "John Barton Hack," Melbourne University Press.

¹³⁷ Don Martin writes that these cuttings came from Port Arthur, but I (and the Port Arthur Authority historians) have been unable to find any evidence of vines ever being grown at Port Arthur, and Swanston's vineyard at New Town is a more likely source.

*Mr Reynell commenced plantings 21 years ago, when a considerable portion of the present orchard was formed. A few vine cuttings obtained from Tasmania were planted at the same time, and three years afterward wine was made from them.*¹³⁹

This may also be connected to a piece in the Courier in 1841 from their Adelaide correspondent:

*The same correspondent, who is a gentleman residing some miles in the interior, mentions that he has an acre of choice ground prepared for the culture of the vine, from cuttings to be furnished from this colony, we believe from the gardens of Captain Swanston*¹⁴⁰

While vineyard development was beginning in the younger colonies, there is barely a mention of Tasmanian viticulture in the newspapers of the day. In 1838 the Lieutenant Governor Sir John Franklin offered 100 guineas to provide prizes in a number of areas, designed to promote agriculture in the colony.¹⁴¹ One of the 17 categories was:

To the person who shall have made the finest wine (not less than one hogshead) from grapes, the growth of the colony

Similar prizes were offered for cider and perry, and for beer.

The early 1840s sees mention of a number of vineyards, generally in real estate advertisements when properties change hands. Often it is difficult or impossible to determine their planting date and it is quite possible that some of them may have been planted in the previous decade.

One important development was the establishment of a vineyard for the collection and dissemination of vines in the north of the state. The first Government Garden in the north was at York Town, planted by Colonel William Paterson in 1805, and maintained by Governor Arthur until at least 1829, long after the settlement had removed to Launceston.¹⁴² Paterson built the original Government House in Launceston on the

¹³⁸ Dirk van Dissel, "John Reynell (1809-1873)," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography- Online edition* (Melbourne University Press, 1976).

¹³⁹ In Andre Simon, *The Wines Vineyards and Vignerons of Australia* (London: Paul Hamlyn, 1970). P.150

¹⁴⁰ *Hobart Town Courier*. 7 September, 1841

¹⁴¹ *Hobart Town Courier and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser*, (Hobart: 1839-1840).12 July, 1839 p.4

¹⁴² Martin, "Early Tasmanian Horticulture." P.3

corner of Brisbane and Lawrence Streets, the eastern end of what is now City Park, in 1810. Down the Lawrence Street frontage he established another Government Garden, but it is unknown whether either it or the York Town garden included grape vines. The Launceston Horticultural Society had been formed in 1838 and in 1841 the Government agreed to lease the Society seven acres adjoining the Government Gardens in Launceston to establish a public garden. In 1843, the Government Gardens were given to the Horticultural Society to be included in their newly established public gardens. In October, 1843, the Examiner published the Horticultural Society's annual report which included a progress report on the establishment of the gardens. Part of this described the establishment of a vineyard:

*A small plantation of about twenty six varieties of vine, received from Sydney, chiefly of hardy sorts, has been planted and are now doing well (a list of these will be appended)*¹⁴³

The list duly followed (Appendix A).

In September, 1845, at their monthly meeting, the Association acknowledged receipt of "vines from Busby's third collection"¹⁴⁴ and the vineyard was thriving:

*The next object of interest which the gardens present is the vineyard; a work which has surpassed the highest anticipations of its promoters. The wood made last year was a subject of astonishment to the oldest vinegrower; and it will, no doubt, bear a considerable quantity of fruit this [the third] season of its growth. The committee will, however, delay for another season to bring it more particularly before the notice of the settlers, until they have had this further proof of its success.*¹⁴⁵

The last comment would suggest that the Society still had some doubts about the suitability of the varieties to ripen fruit in this climate, but in fact it had already begun distributing cuttings to its subscribers in July of 1845:

HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY NOTICE

Subscribers to the Society of One Guinea per annum are entitled to receive cuttings or scions of any trees or shrubs in the gardens.

¹⁴³ *Launceston Examiner*, (Launceston: 1842-1899). 18 October, 1843 p.5

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 10 September, 1845, p.5

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* October 25, 1845 p.3

*The vines are the trees of most consequence, from which cuttings can be obtained this season. They are chiefly early wine grapes.*¹⁴⁶

The Society repeated the offer in 1846, advertising 20 types of grape vine at 3d. each.¹⁴⁷

In 1848, the Examiner provided some advice for aspiring grape growers which gives a good picture of the varieties being offered from the Gardens at the time (Appendix B). The Society advertised these annual distributions until at least 1853, by which time the price had risen to 6d. per cutting and the varietal list to 30 types of grape. Rooted vines were also offered at 1s. each.¹⁴⁸

One northern vineyard with a fairly firm establishment date is that planted by Dr Matthias Gaunt at Windermere on the East Tamar, about 12 miles from Launceston. Dr Gaunt arrived in Hobart with his family in May, 1831 and was granted 2,560 acres on the East bank of the River Tamar. This was extended by a further 1,280 acres in March, 1838.¹⁴⁹

Gaunt established a steam driven sawmill on the property, which he converted to a flour mill in 1844. In 1841, he planted a vineyard with cuttings from Sydney and, by April, 1844, was exhibiting grapes at the Horticultural Show in Launceston:

*The grapes were greatly superior in point of variety to previous years, though nearly all owing to Sydney importations: thirteen different kinds in one tray, from the garden of Dr. Gaunt, attracted considerable attention. With the exception of these, the list of grapes is very small, and shows how much remains to be done to extend this branch of horticulture, in a country so eminently adapted to it.*¹⁵⁰

The establishment date of the vineyard can be firmly established from the report of the 1845 Horticultural Show:

The grapes exhibited were, no doubt, the astonishment of all who had not witnessed the extraordinary growth which that fruit is capable of attaining in the colony.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 30 July, 1845 p.2

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. 3 June, 1846 p.2

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 13 August, 1853, p.2

¹⁴⁹ *Hobart Town Courier*. 7 May, 1838 p.2

¹⁵⁰ *Launceston Examiner*. 6 April, 1844 p.3

The only varieties of importance were from Dr Gaunt's at Windermere, on the banks of the Tamar, about twelve miles from Launceston. The Doctor obtained cuttings from Sydney, about four years ago¹⁵¹; and being trained like gooseberry bushes without any great pains, they show that the true vineyard plan is capable of being adapted here.

The article goes on to praise the size and quality of the black hamburghs, the black syriac¹⁵², the white syriac, and the black and red muscat, and concludes

*It is expected that at least twenty varieties of grapes will be exhibited this time next year.*¹⁵³

Dr Gaunt again dominated the grape section at the 1846 Horticultural Show, exhibiting "Black Syriac or Black Damson; Black Hamburg; Purple and Black Muscat; White ditto; Verdelho or Madiera; Crystal &c, &c."¹⁵⁴

The results of the 1849 Show give us further information about the varieties on Gaunt's vineyard:

*And the Gouais and two others by Dr Gaunt or La Folle is the same grape known at Hobart Town as the Pensbury*¹⁵⁵

By 1949 Dr Gaunt had graciously offered "not to exhibit for prizes at this show, in order to promote more competition"¹⁵⁶.

As with other early Tasmanian viticulturists, the vineyard appears to have been a minor part of Dr Gaunt's activity- his Union Steam Mill was a major concern and he won high awards for flour sent to the Crystal Palace Exhibition in London in 1851¹⁵⁷. He was also a prominent member of the Anti Transportation League and involved in many civic associations. Nevertheless the vineyard was long lasting and in his obituary in the Examiner in 1874 we read that:

¹⁵¹ Giving a planting date for the vineyard of 1841.

¹⁵² Syriac is a synonym for syrah, or shiraz as it is better known in Australia

¹⁵³ *Launceston Examiner*. 12 April, 1845 pp3-4

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 4 April, 1846 p 6

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 19 February, 1848 p.6

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 4 April, 1949, p.1

¹⁵⁷ Bethell, *The Story of Port Dalrymple*.p.131

*Thirty years ago he commenced the cultivation of grapes, and from his vineyard some very superior wine is annually produced.*¹⁵⁸

The newspapers of the time give us tantalizing glimpses of other vineyards, often from real estate advertisements, but their establishment dates are often difficult to determine. I have already mentioned a vineyard at South Arm probably planted by Joseph Tice Gellibrand, an Attorney General of the colony who defended Bartholomew Broughton in his embezzlement case. The property was advertised for sale by his son, T.L. Gellibrand in 1844 after his father's death, and included "the vinery, the very best in the island, about 2 acres, is in full bearing."¹⁵⁹ The fact that the vines were in full bearing suggests an establishment date no later than 1840, but it could of course be earlier.

Of about the same era was a vineyard at *Claremont*, New Town, established by Thomas Giblin. Giblin arrived in Hobart Town in 1828 with his father Robert W. Giblin, who purchased 200 acres at New Town, where Thomas and his brother William built a house which they named *Claremont*. Thomas Giblin was a skilled horticulturalist, a Fellow of the Royal Society, and a frequent exhibitor in Horticultural Society shows. He was also a magistrate and Manager of the Van Diemen's Land Bank, so would certainly have known Swanston, who managed the rival Derwent Bank.

The information about the vineyard comes from his son, Wilfred Giblin who wrote and published the family history *Kith and Kin* in 1945. He writes:

In addition to planting an apple orchard, my father also planted a vineyard of both red and white grapes. From this he made excellent wine which was awarded several medals in the local shows. In 1845, the diary records that 200 gallons of red wine and 180 gallons of white wine were made. In addition, 80 gallons of cider were made from 50 bushels of apples. In 1847 an addition was made to the house, consisting of a large dining room with domed ceiling beneath this was a large cellar for storage of the hogsheads of wine. For the work of the vineyard, he imported two Swiss peasants, who worked well until the gold diggings in Victoria

¹⁵⁸ *Launceston Examiner*. 12 May, 1874, p.3

¹⁵⁹ *Hobart Town Courier*. 17 December, 1844

*induced them to abscond. After that the vineyard was neglected and finally dug up.*¹⁶⁰

Another son, Ronald Worthy Giblin, corroborates the story in an unpublished family history, adding “I have heard my father say that he would have been able to realize a thousand pounds a year from this industry had he devoted himself entirely to it”¹⁶¹

That the vineyard was bearing in 1845 gives us an establishment date no later than 1841 or 1842, but Giblin’s viticultural activity may have been much earlier as the Colonial Times in 1829 reports him propagating grape vines from the seeds of raisins.¹⁶²

Giblin did indeed win prizes for both grapes and wine at Horticultural Shows, and won first prize at the Gardeners’ and Amateurs’ Horticultural Society Show in 1854 for a sparkling wine which he rather prophetically called “Sparkling Tasmania”.¹⁶³ This was probably one of the last vintages produced from the vineyard as the Victorian gold rush was well under way by this time and the Swiss vine dressers had probably absconded.

The research of Tim McManus in the production of his book *Thanks to Providence*¹⁶⁴ has uncovered a vineyard at Falmouth, on the East coast of Tasmania.

In 1833, an early East coast settler, William Steel, in a letter to the Surveyor General, had mentioned his intention to “lay out a small vineyard amongst the hills and also to erect a cottage for its protection”. Fifteen years later, after William’s death, his son Michael Steel, with Jane Cooke, applied for a 2,560 acre grant at Falmouth. Part of the requirement for a grant was having made improvements to their current property *Thomson Villa*, so a valuation was carried out by three “reputable citizens”, including a representative from the Land Commissioner’s office. The Certificate of Valuation, dated 10 July, 1848 contains this item:

150 acres layd (sic) down in Grapes and under Cultivation

¹⁶⁰ Wilfred Giblin, *Kith and Kin: Some Notes on Our Branch of Our Family* (Hobart: W.W. Giblin, 1945). P.18

¹⁶¹ Ronald Worthy Giblin, "Unpublished Family History," (Hobart). P.10

¹⁶² *Colonial Times*. 16 January, 1829, p.4

¹⁶³ *Ibid.* 8 December, 1854 p.3

¹⁶⁴ Tim McManus, *"Thanks to Providence": A History of Falmouth, Tasmania, and Its People* (Falmouth: T. McManus, 1993).

It seems unlikely that a vineyard of this size could have existed without any other mention in the newspapers or other records of the time, but, as McManus points out:

*There were quite enough capital improvements to obviate the need to make false claims for grapes, and anyway the signature of three reputable inspecting citizens were appended thereto so it must be assumed a vineyard did exist.*¹⁶⁵

A more plausible interpretation would be that the 150 acres were partly vineyard and partly under cultivation for other purposes and this seems most likely. McManus also found 150 acres marked as “under cultivation” on Dawson’s 1840 survey map of the region.

The grant application was successful but there is no further evidence of the vineyard. All we can say of the establishment date is that it was not later than 1848.

Joseph Bonney of *Woodhall*, near Perth was Member for Cornwall in the Legislative Council and a frequent exhibitor in Horticultural Shows, winning prizes both for wine and for wine variety grapes (Black Muscat and White Corinth) the earliest being 1844.¹⁶⁶

Evidence that he had a vineyard comes from a chance mention in the *Courier* in 1848 after a violent hailstorm

*Mr Bonney’s vines sustained much damage; whole bunches of grapes were cut off by the falling ice, as if by a knife; out of some tons, scarcely a bunch escaped injury.....*¹⁶⁷

“Out of some tons” certainly suggests that these were more than backyard vines and that a mature vineyard existed. The fact that Bonney was exhibiting wine grapes in 1844 suggests an establishment date of around 1840 or earlier.

Some early vineyards are only revealed to us through real estate advertising. For example an advertisement in the *Examiner* in 1848 provides the only evidence of a vineyard on Major Wentworth’s property *Bel-Respiro*, at Kelso, on the West Tamar:

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.* p.80

¹⁶⁶ *Launceston Examiner*. April 6, 1844 p.5

¹⁶⁷ *Hobart Town Courier*. 26 February, 1848

FOR SALE- The Estate of Bel-Respiro, consisting of 1140 acres.....

.....a large and productive garden; and a small vineyard.¹⁶⁸

It seems clear that there were many such small vineyards on both city and country Estates, but that they were providing fruit and wine for the residents and friends rather than operating as commercial concerns.

Certainly viticulture was still being encouraged. Newspapers carried viticultural advice like this guide to pruning, reprinted from the South Australian:

MAXIMS: Each vine should be similar in every respect- that pruning may be quick and simple, and fruit ripe together.

Each vine should be separate, compact and independent.

Every needless cut wastes time and sap

Every needless shoot robs the rest

All needless old wood is mischievous

A complete vineyard-vine is a sturdy little tree, with a formal, thick head of leaves and stopped shoots; under which hang the bunches, safe alike from

earth and sun¹⁶⁹

And in 1847, the Colonial Times printed a long piece on the culture of the vine by NSW grower James King.¹⁷⁰

Birds were already a problem, as shown by some rather bizarre advice in the Hobart Town Courier suggesting that tethered cats would be an effective deterrent, adding:

a wall of vines, between two hundred and three hundred yards long, in the nursery of Mr Kirke, of Brompton, the fruit of which in all previous seasons had been very much injured by birds, was, in 1834, completely protected, in consequence of a cat having voluntarily posted himself sentry upon it.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ *Launceston Examiner*. 23 February, 1848 p.1

¹⁶⁹ *Colonial Times*. 6 February, 1846 p.4

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*. 26 November, 1847, p.4

¹⁷¹ *Hobart Town Courier and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser*. P.2

Horticultural Societies continued to enthusiastically promote the potential of the colony for wine production, with this breathless account claiming that the grapes exhibited showed

*the capacity of the colony for a beauty and superiority of growth hardly credible, and very slow to be admitted by our neighbours, who are unwilling to contemplate us as rivals in the production of the grape. The Black Hamburgs, though grown as standards, without any trellis, were as fine or finer than any gentleman present ever beheld before. Visitors had seen them from Sydney, from Italy, from the greenhouses and hothouses of England, and all admitted that finer specimens had never been seen. With such examples it ought not to be long before the growth of vines shall claim that share of attention which, from their great value as a colonial product, and the easy practicability of their culture, they deserve from the settlers.*¹⁷²

But by 1847, there are also indications that Tasmania is beginning to be regarded as “not a wine producing state”. The Colonial Times, supporting a tax on UK imports, editorializes:

*Not a drop of Champagne, Burgundy, Claret, Madiera or wine of any sort..... should be admitted here, so long as the vineyards of New South Wales could furnish us with an adequate supply of an excellent vintage, or what is still better, so long as our own brewers could provide us with excellent Tasmanian wine under the name of “colonial beer”.*¹⁷³

This certainly suggests that, by this time, the writer believed there was little chance of Tasmania becoming self sufficient as a wine producer, let alone an exporter.

The best documented vineyard in the 1840s was the Swanston vineyard in New-town, originally planted by Bartholomew Broughton around 1823. As discussed earlier, Swanston took over the vineyard around 1830 and appears to have enlarged it in the early 1940s.

At the same time, Swanston was involved in Victoria and Victorian viticulture. He had been a prime mover in the Port Phillip Association, formed in 1834, along with former

¹⁷² *Launceston Examiner*. 31 March, 1847 p.6

¹⁷³ *Colonial Times*. 20 July, 1847 p.3

Attorney General (and fellow vigneron) Joseph Gellibrand, and of course, John Batman, which set out to form a settlement at Port Phillip.¹⁷⁴

As part of his Victorian activity, he became involved in the beginnings of viticulture in the state. In 1843 we find him buying 234 acres of land in Geelong at one pound per acre.¹⁷⁵ This may have been the land later leased by the prominent Swiss vigneron John Belperroud, whose *Berramongo* Vineyard was owned by Charles Swanston and Edward Willis in the 1850s¹⁷⁶. Belperroud credits Swanston's Hobart vineyard as a source of grape cuttings for the Geelong vineyards, together with McArthur of Camden.¹⁷⁷

Back in Van Diemen's Land, by 1848, Swanston's efforts were being recognized in the press:

We allude to the manufacture of wines, liquors and vinegar, which is carried on by Captain Swanston at New Town, under the able superintendence of Mr. Francis Pain, to an extent not generally known.

The attention which Captain Swanston has paid to the cultivation of grapes is a subject of general notoriety, and the care which has been devoted to their culture has been proved by its beneficial results. Champagne, pink and pale, sparkling and delicious, and infinitely superior to the meretricious, but insinuating compound, imported under this designation, has been produced to an extent which will not only suffice for our own consumption of this alluring beverage, but will enable the manufacturer to spare a good portion for our neighbours. Good, fragrant and purely fermented claret is also manufactured in a manner highly creditable to Mr Payne,¹⁷⁸ who being, as we understand, a native of Guernsey, must possess a complete knowledge of wine making.¹⁷⁹ The wines we have mentioned are of first-rate quality, as are also the liquors and vinegar, and should they, as it is to be hoped that they will, be brought into the market, a vast outlay of capital for foreign importation will be saved, and that money, which is so much needed, kept in the colony.

¹⁷⁴ Hudspeth, "The Rise and Fall of Charles Swanston." P.6

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. 24 May, 1843 p.6

¹⁷⁶ Dunstan, *Better Than Pommard-a History of Wine in Victoria*. P.40 (presumably Charles Swanston Jr, as Swanston Sr died in 1850.)

¹⁷⁷ W.S. Benwell, *Journey to Wine in Victoria* (Melbourne: Pitman Publishing, 1978). P.18

¹⁷⁸ Spelt "Pain" earlier in the article

¹⁷⁹ Guernsey has no history of wine making, but a strong tradition of cider making, and this may have been Mr Payne's area of expertise

The writer goes on, at great length and with increasingly florid prose, to talk about Captain Swanston's use of local materials in his cooperage and basket making enterprises and ends with the exhortation:

*...we may hope that Captain Swanston's example will be followed by other affluent settlers, who have suitable land to grow the vine, and cultivating it turn its produce to a profitable account.. If we must have champagne and claret, let us, in all reason and good fellowship, obtain it from our friends and neighbours....*¹⁸⁰

The reference to the use of local materials in cooperage is supported by an article in the Launceston Examiner, extolling the virtues of silver wattle, which was

*used in the establishment of C. Swanston Esq., in the construction of vessels employed in the preparation and preservation of the superior wine he obtains from his vineyard at New Town.*¹⁸¹

In 1848, Swanston engaged Messrs. Lowes and MacMichael to conduct a tasting and sale of his wines, ciders, and liqueurs at the Exchange Rooms in Hobart on November 1. Apart from Bartholomew Broughton's sale of wine from the same vineyard 20 years earlier, this is the only example of Tasmanian wine being advertised for sale. The event was sufficiently unusual to attract editorial coverage:

*COLONIAL WINES, LIQUEURS, &c.- The attention of the public is directed to a sale of these articles, the produce of the vineyard of Captain Swanston, which will take place on the 1st next month. Encouraging and promoting the growth of the wine will be proved by the instance now before us to be well worthy the study of the colonists. With these views Captain Swanston has always endeavoured to lead the van in improvement.*¹⁸²

An advertisement appeared the same day listing the products of the vineyard offered:

SIXTY DOZEN sparkling TASMANIAN CHAMPAGNE

Sixty dozen golden sherry

Forty dozen champagne cider

¹⁸⁰ *Colonial Times*. 22 September, 1848 p.2

¹⁸¹ *Launceston Examiner*. 15 September, 1847 p.5

¹⁸² *Hobart Town Courier*. 7 October, 1848 p.2

Twenty dozen vinaigre de Françoise

Twenty dozen liqueurs, assorted; consisting of Curaçoa, Eau d'Or, Ratafie, Chinois, Crème d'Orange, Angelique, in one dozen baskets

On which occasion the auctioneers particularly invite not only connoisseurs, but all parties interested in the prosperity of the colony, feeling confident that this first specimen is sufficient proof of the climate being adapted for the growth and manufacture of the choicest wines; and trust a spirit of emulation will be excited to induce a cultivation of the vine to an extent not only to supply our own wants, but to form a staple article of export.

In a few weeks the claret will be exhibited also for sale, which will be found superior to any imported, and promising to exceed in flavour the first growth of France.¹⁸³

On the appointed day, the Courier was whipping up excitement about the sale, predicting that the wines could become

one of the most important productions of this country¹⁸⁴

The Courier then published a full and detailed account of the sale, which, because of the unique nature of the event in Tasmania's wine history, is worth quoting in full:

Sale of Colonial Wines, &c. – The sale of colonial wines, liqueurs, &c., the produce of Captain Swanston's vineyard, was held at the Exchange Mart on Wednesday afternoon. The attendance was numerous. Amongst those present we noticed Captains Stanley, Denison and Haddon; J.Hone, A Perry, J. Foster, J. Allport, J. Burnett, S. Moses, J.Roberts, F. Kerr and W.V. Smith, Esqrs., the Puisne Judge; R. Lewis, H. Degraives, W. Carter, H.L. Moses, C.T. Smith, J.M. Loughnan, A.H. Maning, W. Sorell, H. Tonkin, R. Pitcairn, A. McNaughton, and J.L. Burnett, Esqrs. As an instance also of the interest excited by the first sale of a colonially-manufactured article it may be mentioned that several licensed victuallers were present, including Messrs. J. Mezger, F. Moore, C. Cox, jun., Ivey, Martin, and McGrath, some of whom were purchasers. The following prices were realized:- Sherry, 14s.6d. per dozen; cider champagne, a fine article, 14s. per dozen; Tasmanian champagne, in dozen baskets, two years old, went off at 40s.; gold cordial, a rich and well got up article, brought 16s. per dozen; mocha and ratafie, 46s.; raspberry vinegar went off at 13s. per dozen. The result of this sale has been highly satisfactory to

¹⁸³ Ibid. 7 October, 1848, p.3

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. 1 November, 1848 p.2

*all parties – to the enterprising cultivator, and to those colonists who attach the deepest importance to the promotion of colonial manufactures as a source of wealth to the colony. It is also a feat worthy of record, that when a quantity of French liqueurs were afterwards offered for sale there was not a single bidder. In the production of these liqueurs a great quantity of French brandy was employed, for which 23s. per gallon was given. Had distillation been allowed in the colony, a considerable saving would have been affected; and although French liqueurs can be imported with 12 per cent duty, the colonial article has sustained a position of prominence. Should some legislative encouragement be afforded to the process of distillation, the colonists of Van Diemen's Land would be able to supply the whole of Australian settlements with wines and liqueurs of a superior vintage. The claret and pink champagne, the produce of the same vineyard, will be offered for sale in about three months from this date. If these samples, when next to market, are got up in the same superior manner as those offered to public competition on Wednesday, they will command a ready and remunerating sale. The sherry had been three years in bottle, and was manufactured before Captain Swanston had obtained much experience; otherwise it would have gone off at a higher figure.*¹⁸⁵

The Colonial Times also saw the sale as the birth of a new export industry¹⁸⁶.

By this time, Swanston appears to regard his vineyard as a viable commercial venture and as late as September, 1849 is importing “two bundles of vines” from Port Phillip to add to his rootstock.¹⁸⁷ But even as the vineyard was finally thriving, the Derwent Bank was wilting fast. The price of wool had collapsed and property values had halved, with pastoralists unable to maintain the high interest on their mortgages. In 1848 the Bank's half yearly dividend slumped to 3½% and in 1849, no dividend at all was paid. Swanston, financially ruined, resigned his position at the Bank in October, 1849. In a final success, he won the Horticultural Society medal for wine in December, but the £1 prizemoney was hardly going to save the day. He left the Colony for San Francisco on January 16¹⁸⁸, just a week before his New-town estate was advertised for sale. Messrs. Lowes and MacMichael offered the property for sale on the 6th of February, and the advertisement for Lot 1 included the house and:

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. 4 November, 1848, p.2

¹⁸⁶ *Colonial Times*. 10 October, 1848, p.3

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. 14 September, 1849, p.2

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. 22 January, 1850, p.2

...the vineyard and garden are of a sufficient extent to yield a lucrative return in the manufacture of all descriptions of winethe Wine Stores and Manufactory are included in this Lot.

Figure 4



The building pictured above is in close proximity to Swanston’s house and is listed in heritage records as a granary. Both the present owner and the writer consider that this was more likely to have been the wine manufactory, and archaeological examination would no doubt cast light on this.

The Vinegar Manufactory and “extensive Garden by the side of the Creek” were offered separately, as were about 20,000 gallons of vinegar, “ in cases of various sizes and progressive stages of manufacture”, 35 hogsheads cider, 17 hogsheads champagne, 7 ½ hogsheads claret plus 40 dozen bottles of Champagne and 27 dozen claret.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ *Hobart Town Courier*. 26 January, 1850 p.3

The Courier reported the result of the sale:

SALE AT NEW TOWN- An extensive sale was held by Messrs. Lowes and MacMichael on Wednesday last, when the following properties, recently the estate of Captain Swanston, were disposed of to the highest bidders. The family mansion, vineyard garden, wine stores, and manufactory, were purchased by W. Carter Esq. for the sum of £2150; a building site, vinegar manufactory and garden by the side of New Town Creek....was purchased by A. Maning Esq. for £550.¹⁹⁰

Swanston briefly set up business as a shipping agent in San Francisco, but was not kindly treated by the local press, a correspondent to the Colonial Times writing:

The private Estate of the late manager, Captain Swanston, is estimated to realize about ten shillings in the pound. His debt to the Derwent Bank is £53,000.....this was a most unprincipled amount of debt to be incurred by the managing director to the bank, out of a capital of £77,000! As the debt at present stands at £65,000 the whole capital within £12,000 has been absorbed in carrying out the private speculations of the manager.¹⁹¹

Swanston died on a return journey from San Francisco to Australia and was buried at sea on 5 September, 1850. The purchaser of his New-town vineyard, William Carter, was to become first Mayor of Hobart in 1853¹⁹², but there is no further mention of the vineyard or the making of wine.

Despite his difficulties, Swanston's wine sale seems to have stimulated interest in viticulture. Prior to the sale the Colonial Times announced that Mr T.Y. Lowes was to plant a vineyard and had "reclaimed an allotment of land from the very mountain at the side of Veteran's Row" and intended to plant it with vines "for the manufacture of colonial wines".¹⁹³ Lowes was a prominent Hobart businessman, auctioneer and estate agent, who was to handle the sale of Swanston's wine later in the year. He would have known Swanston, and must have already had access to vines, winning first prize at the Hobart Horticultural Society Show for two bottles of wine in April, 1848.¹⁹⁴ In 1847,

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. 9 February, 1850, p.2

¹⁹¹ *Launceston Examiner*. 17 July, 1850, p.6

¹⁹² E. Graeme Robertson, *Early Buildings of Southern Tasmania*, vol. 2 (Melbourne: Georgian House, 1985). P.224

¹⁹³ *Colonial Times*. 20 October, 1848 p.2

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. 8 April, 1848, p.2

Lowes advertised for “parties disposed to contract for preparing land for a Vineyard”¹⁹⁵ and the development apparently went ahead for, in 1852, we see Lowes advertising the sale of “the vineyard at the back of Mr. Cleary’s, Veteran’s Row”.

Real estate advertising also reveals several small vineyards which may have been planted around that time. In Launceston, in 1854, we see advertised:

An Excellent Garden and Vineyard and adjoining ground on the Cataract Hill, bounded by the gardens of R.C. Gunn Esq.....

....This land about seven years since was subdivided into several paddocks, a substantial stone cottage and out-buildings erected, garden and vinery laid out.....Seven hundred of the choicest vines, imported from New South Wales, with a great number of the rarest fruit trees, were planted by an experienced gardener.....¹⁹⁶

This suggests a vineyard establishment date of around 1847 or 1848.

In the same year *Springfield* in Glen Dhu was advertised after the death of its owner Mr T. Scott:

It consists of 50 acres of ground, a Garden, Vineyard, Orchard, covering four acres of ground.....¹⁹⁷

In 1856 a property was advertised “a short distance from the Powder Magazine”, owned by Mr Bennett who was leaving the Colony:

The soil, the sheltered position of the place and the aspect, being singularly adapted for the purpose, Mr Button, about seven years since, laid out a VINEYARD, and at great expense procured from New South Wales a variety of the choicest plants. These, together with numerous fruit trees of the rarest kind, have by great care and industry been brought into a high state of culture, and the fruit they produce is a source of considerable profit.....¹⁹⁸

This may well be the same property as the one advertised previously on the Cataract Hill. The Powder Magazine was at the base of the Cataract Hill, both properties were 11 acres

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. 10 August, 1847, p.1

¹⁹⁶ *Launceston Examiner*. 13 April, 1854, p.4

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. 16 December, 1854, p.3

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. 11 December, 1856, p.3

with a stone cottage, and the vineyard stories are strikingly similar. The Mr. Button referred to may well have been William Stammers Button who was Mayor of Launceston from 1853 to 1856. Button was a prominent member of the Launceston Horticultural Society, and in 1849 won a second prize for a “pleasant light wine from the sweetwater grape”¹⁹⁹, and in 1851 second prize for both the best collection of grapes and best black syriac²⁰⁰.

In 1853, Mrs Synnot’s property in Canning Street, Launceston was advertised for sale with “numerous choice and very rare old vines, the fruit of which is estimated at an annual value of £50.”²⁰¹

Also in 1853, the Colonial Times reported a sale from Mr Lowes to Mr Mitchell of “a brick cottage in Warwick Street, ...for £830. An allotment adjoining for £150. The vineyard for £270.”²⁰² In the following year, auctioneer W.A. Guesdon offered eight acres of fruit and market garden bounded by Hill Street, Adelaide Street, Arthur Street and Lochnier Streets in Hobart. Lot 1 included::

*a garden in the highest state of cultivation, and fully stocked with the choicest fruit trees, vines, &c.; and as evidence of the character and abundance of the fruit, it was valued, for the year, at between £300 and £400.*²⁰³

So there is ample evidence to show that grape vines were widely planted throughout the colony in its first fifty years. Apart from the frequent mention of vines in property sales, there are numerous advertisements from auction houses offering grape vines for sale, and nurseries such as John Osborne in Sandy Bay and Samuel Edsall in Launceston also offered grape vines as part of their permanent stock. A great deal of planting material, both cuttings and rootlings, would have been distributed from the Horticultural Gardens in Hobart and Launceston.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. 14 April, 1849, p.5

²⁰⁰ Ibid. 5 April, 1851, p. 5

²⁰¹ Ibid. 1 December, 1853, p.3

²⁰² *Colonial Times*. 19 July, 1853 p.2

²⁰³ Ibid. 11 March, 1854, p.1

Despite the availability of vines and their widespread planting, there seem to have been only two growers (with the same vineyard) who were able to progress to commercial sale of wines- Bartholomew Broughton and Charles Swanston, the successive owners of *Prospect Farm* at New-town, and, for Swanston at least, it was a very minor part of his business activity. It is of course possible that others were selling wine without advertising, but given the newspaper attention accorded to both Broughton and Swanston, it seems unlikely that any other commercial wine venture would not have received editorial mention. In view of this lack of commercial focus, it is probably a misnomer to call viticulture and wine making an “industry” at this stage in Tasmania.

The second half of the 19th century would see an enormous expansion of the wine industry in Australia. In 1847 the Hunter Valley Viticultural Association was formed. The many small vineyards existing there were, as in Tasmania, usually part of larger farming estates, but the next 40 years were to be the “golden era” of the Hunter²⁰⁴. In Victoria the gold rush of the 1850s, after causing initial problems through shortage of labour, fuelled a dramatic expansion of vineyards to meet the demands of thirsty miners. German settlers developed the Barossa and Clare Valleys and Swiss immigrants did the same in the Yarra Valley and Geelong areas of Victoria.

Tasmania had the land, the need for new industry, and the vine material available for potential expansion. There were successful vineyards in the state and some knowledge by now of viticulture and winemaking. Hopes were high that the second half of the nineteenth century would see a genuine wine industry in the state, but these hopes would fade over the next 20 years. The reasons for the decline are examined fully in Chapter 4.

²⁰⁴ James Halliday and Ray Jarratt, *The Wines and History of the Hunter Valley* (Melbourne: Mead & Beckett Publishing, 1979). P.31

CHAPTER 3

THE BERNACCHI EXPERIMENT

Despite the widespread planting of grapes for wine production in the first half of the 19th century, by the 1870s there seem to be virtually no vineyards left in Tasmania, with vines confined to home gardens. There is little evidence of any viticultural activity in Tasmania in the 1860s. In 1863, the Mercury published an article describing the progress of Australian vineyards, quoting acres planted in each state and concluding:

To vineyards this colony does not yet aspire.¹

In the same year, a comparison of agricultural statistics for Tasmania and South Australia showed five million vines planted in South Australia and none in Tasmania,² although these figures provoked an editorial in the Mercury, saying

If one sort of grape vine cannot be grown here to advantage, there are 10 that can. And yet this important branch of industry has been so neglected by us, as not to be thought worthy of notice in our annual statistical tables.³

The vine still had its champions. William Henty, long both a promoter and exponent of viticulture in the colony, was now resident in London, but wrote a long letter to the Southern Tasmanian Agricultural, Pastoral and Horticultural Association, which was published in the Mercury in 1864. In it he encourages the vine grower:

Having witnessed the success of Dr Gaunt in making a good wine from standard vines; having myself under similar circumstances, made a good claret, I have proof that Tasmania may be included within the benefit of the following rule, viz., "That wherever the vine will thoroughly ripen its fruit, there good wine can be made."⁴

¹ *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 21 April, 1863, p.3

² *Ibid.* 15 July, 1863, p.2

³ *Ibid.* 22 October, 1863, p.2

⁴ *Ibid.* 17 May, 1864, p.2

Henty goes on to criticize the widespread planting of the sweetwater grape which he considered quite unsuitable for wine. Interestingly, he considered the climate of Tasmania to be closest to Rousillon in southern France, and believed that “scyras (or shiraz), carignan, grinache and matarot” which flourished in that region, may be preferable to the “black cluster or Burgundy” which was the currently favoured red varietal. He concludes optimistically:

*A gentleman who will, I suppose see this letter, may remember my prophesy on leaving Hobart Town that within four or five years you would see a furore for vine-growing in Tasmania, and I yet hold to that expression.*⁵

Certainly there was still some activity. The Melbourne Argus in 1865 advertises “33 cases Tasmanian wine”⁶, although, as it was advertised with a quantity of Tasmanian jams, this could well have been wine from fruit other than the grape.

Bleasdale publishes a table of wine imported into NSW during 1865, recording that Tasmania had sent “one hogshead, 8 casks, 3 quarter casks, 3 cases, 182 gallons”⁷, although again, the type of wine is not specified.

In 1878, phylloxera, the vine louse which had ravaged vineyards in Europe, had been discovered in Victoria and the Grape Vine Bill was put to the Legislative Council, proposing to ban the importation of vines from the Australian mainland to protect Tasmanian vineyards. The Mercury reports:

Mr Crowther spoke of the Bill as a harmless piece of legislation, inasmuch as there were no vineyards to protect in the colony, the greater portion of the vines having been destroyed within the last four or five years by oidium. His own stock of vines had been blighted by the disease

Oidium was the French name for powdery mildew, which had decimated French vineyards 20 years earlier. It appeared in South Australia in 1872⁸ and soon made its way into Tasmania.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ *The Argus*, (Melbourne). 4 February, 1865, p.2

⁷ John Bleasdale, *On Colonial Wines- a Paper Read before the Royal Society of Victoria* (Melbourne: Stillwell and Knight, 1867). P.4

It seemed to be the last straw for viticulture in Tasmania, although the reasons for its demise are more fully evaluated in the next chapter.

Into this bleak viticultural landscape sailed Signor Angelo Giulio Diego Bernacchi, who arrived in Launceston with his wife, three children and his private secretary, Mr Thomas Bower, on board the *Flinders* on January 18, 1884.⁹

Born in Lombardy, Italy, in 1853, Bernacchi had been a successful silk merchant in Manchester, England, holding the agencies for large silk houses in Italy and France. His health was poor and he sold his business in 1883, emigrating to Tasmania in search of a kinder climate.¹⁰

On arrival in Tasmania, he quickly gained an appointment with the Premier William Giblin to discuss the possibility of founding a sericulture industry in the state¹¹. Giblin referred him to the Deputy Commissioner of Public Lands to assist him in finding suitable land. Mrs Caroline Morton writing as “Dio”¹² relates that Bernacchi, accompanied by Mr E. A. Counsel of the Lands Department, travelled to Swansea on the East coast looking for suitable land. Their horse went lame and, to pass the time while the horse rested, they took a boat to Maria Island. Visiting the old penal settlement at Darlington, Bernacchi discovered a peach tree bearing fully ripe fruit and concluded that the island would be climatically perfect for his purposes.

The Government had been inviting tenders for a 14 year lease of Maria Island the previous year¹³, and now Bernacchi sought a lease from the Government to develop both sericulture and viticulture on the island. Bernacchi was clearly an impressive and persuasive personality and soon had the Minister of Lands, Mr. N.J. Brown, enthusiastic about his scheme, to the extent that his Ministry recommended to Parliament that

⁸ *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 23 November, 1872, p.3

⁹ *Ibid.* 18 January, 1884, p.2

¹⁰ *Launceston Examiner*. 18 January, 1896, p. 13

¹¹ *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 28 January, 1884, p.2

¹² "Dio", *Maria Island, Its Past, Present and Possible Future; with an Account of the Maria Island Exhibits at the Melbourne Centennial Exhibition 1888-9* (Hobart: The Mercury, 1888).

¹³ *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 20 December, 1883, p.4

Bernacchi be permitted to occupy the island, without the usual procedure of competitive tender or public auction. He proposed that Bernacchi should occupy the island at the nominal rental of one shilling per year for 10 years to establish the industries and thereafter be granted a lease at £300 per year, provided that the industries carried on.¹⁴ While this legislation was being debated and prepared, he granted Bernacchi a six month occupational licence for the island.

On April 17, 1884, Bernacchi set out with his family, a menagerie of animals, furniture and farm equipment for Maria Island. “Dio” describes their first days on the island:

*The walls of one or two houses were still standing , and in the corner of one of these, with blue-gum leaves for beds, they camped at first, though it was not long before some sheets of iron were put on a roof, and doors and windows put in, to make one of the cottages habitable.*¹⁵

Bernacchi wasted no time in proclaiming his domain, taking advertisements in the Hobart press:

NOTICE- I hereby CAUTION all persons against TRESPASSING ON Maria Island without my permission, under any pretence whatever. All dogs will be shot.

*D. BERNACCHI, Maria Island, April 29.*¹⁶

There was considerable community opposition to the leasing of the island, but Bernacchi was a master of public relations and soon the Mercury was publishing a series of three long articles from “a special correspondent” eulogizing both Maria Island and Bernacchi’s plans for it¹⁷. Anticipating a close vote, the correspondent writes:

I heard a rumour that a certain member is going to vote against a lease being granted because Mr Bernacchi is an Italian. The member fears a Machiavellian plot is projected on the part of Italy that will menace

¹⁴ Ibid. 12 March, 1884, p.2

¹⁵ “Dio”———, *Maria Island, Its Past, Present and Possible Future; with an Account of the Maria Island Exhibits at the Melbourne Centennial Exhibition 1888-9*. P.32

¹⁶ *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 3 May, 1884, p.1

¹⁷ Ibid. 14, 16 & 23 August, 1884

*Tasmania's safety. He does not know of the warm friendship between England and Italy.....*¹⁸

The third of the articles describes Bernacchi's vision for the vineyards to be established on stony, basaltic soils near Darlington. The table grapes Vine d'Ischia and Luglienga would be grown, together with wine varieties "Pinots de Bourgogne (Burgundy, we call it), Clavner (Alsace)¹⁹, Czerna-Okrugla-ranka²⁰ and different sorts of Gamays. The red and white Muscat, Malvoisie²¹ also, which give a good wine, light and well flavoured."²²

In September, the Minister for Lands gave notice of his intention to introduce a Bill which would provide Bernacchi with a 10 year lease at a peppercorn rental on condition of his spending £10,000 in 10 years, with at least £5000 in the first five years.²³ The Maria Island Bill was passed through the early stages on September 16, with the second reading set for September 23.

Bernacchi was however, unhappy with a number of aspects of the Bill, and was to prove an effective negotiator. In particular he objected to a provision giving the Government the right to resume the island after three years on payment only of the value of improvements made. The Government soon conceded that clause and the Bill was massaged into a form which satisfied both parties, with the provision of a £2000 bonus for the first £5000 worth of wine or silk produced on the island. Despite a comment by a correspondent to the Mercury that the bill "appears to be authored by Mr Bernacchi or his solicitors"²⁴ the Maria Island Bill received its second reading on October 29 and was finally passed on November 18. If £5000 was spent within five years, Bernacchi could select and purchase 500 acres at £1 per acre, with a further 500 acres after 10 years. If he was successful with either viticulture or sericulture after 10 years, he would be granted a further 40 years lease at £300 a year.

¹⁸ Ibid. 14 August, 1884, p.3

¹⁹ Clavner is a synonym for various varieties, usually of the pinot family

²⁰ "Vitis International Variety Catalogue," (Institute for Grapevine Breeding, 2011). Cerna Ranka and Okrugla Ranka are listed as synonyms for pinot noir.

²¹ Listed as a synonym for pinot gris or bourboulenc in France

²² *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 23 August, 1884, p.1

²³ Ibid. 13 September, 1844, p.2

²⁴ Ibid. 31 October, 1884, p.3

*In January, 1885, the Speaker of the Victorian Legislative Assembly, Mr. M.H Davies, visited the island, and, caught up by Bernacchi's enthusiasm and vision, became a partner in the project.*²⁵

In March, 1885, Bernacchi was invited to visit Hubert de Castella's St Hubert vineyard in Victoria's Yarra Valley and describes his visit in detail in a letter to the editor of the Mercury²⁶. De Castella was very helpful to Bernacchi

Mr. de Castella will supply me with some 30,000 or 40,000 plants of vines out of his nursery, while some of the plants for table grapes and for champagne I shall obtain from the Murray district.

Having already engaged a superintendent vigneron, who acquired great experience both in Victoria and in Italy, as well as other vignerons, I have also ordered all the necessary implements, the same as those used at Mr. de Castella's vineyard.

For the benefit of the temperance movement, Bernacchi added:

The experience of older nations has shown beyond doubt that the people of wine growing countries are sober in their habits and that the consumption of light wines is conducive to temperance and health.

By mid May, 20 men from the St Hubert vineyard, mainly Swiss and Italian, were preparing the ground for planting on Maria Island. The chief vigneron was Swiss born Martin Zanonlli, who had apparently worked in Bordeaux vineyards in France, before spending 12 years in viticulture in Victoria.²⁷ Bernacchi had purchased the small steamer *Te Papua* which was providing a daily service to and from the island, and a new jetty was to be built at Darlington. A further 20 German emigrants were employed by Bernacchi to work on the vineyard, and arrived on the island in September, 1885.²⁸

In May, 1886 the Treasurer and Minister for Lands visited the island to inspect progress. They were shown over the vineyard, by then some 40 acres, and the Minister for Lands cut the first bunch of cabernet sauvignon grapes and presented it to Madame Bernacchi.

²⁵ Margaret Weidenhofer, *Maria Island- a Tasmanian Eden* (Melbourne: Darlington Press, 1978). P.33

²⁶ *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 28 March, 1885, p.2

²⁷ *Launceston Examiner*. 19 October, 1885, p.3 (Weidenhofer gives the name as Zanolla)

²⁸ *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 23 September, 1885, p.2

This is no mean feat from a vineyard which was only planted 10 months previously, and the only obvious explanation was that some of the rootlings imported from St Hubert may have been more advanced vines. Ludeke writes that the vines were two years old at time of planting.²⁹ This seems the only way to explain Bernacchi's later claim (in October) that his one year old vineyard contained 17,000 four year old vines³⁰. Of course the other explanation for the Minister's first bunch is the popular story of the time that the bunches of grapes had been tied onto the vines with silk thread, but as all accounts have the Minister cutting the bunch, such a deception seems unlikely to have succeeded. It should be noted however, that no press representatives had accompanied the Minister and the account of the cutting of the first grapes had been supplied to the newspapers either by Bernacchi or by the politician.

When Mr. W. Crosby in the Legislative Council asked Bernacchi to provide details of his progress in viticulture and sericulture, it was time for another public relations push. In October, he invited Members of Parliament and the press to join the *SS Warrentinna* from Hobart to spend some time as his guests on the island. This resulted in long, positive newspaper stories in both the north and south of the state, universally expressing astonishment at what Bernacchi had achieved in such a short time. The Examiner correspondent was particularly effusive:

*But one opinion was expressed by the visitors, and that is that every possible credit without exception is due to Signor Bernacchi for what he has accomplished on the island, the result so far being satisfactory in the extreme, and with every promise of most successful results being ultimately obtained. The visitors are unstinting in their praise of the great hospitality and attention extended by the Bernacchis.*³¹

King Diego, as he was dubbed by the Tasmanian Mail, certainly knew how to entertain on a grand scale. As the *Warrentinna* steamed down the river guests were serenaded by the Croccia brothers, an "Italian quarteto", and every glass was filled with champagne.

²⁹ Michael Ludeke, *Tasmania's Maria Island: A Comprehensive History and Visitor's Guide* (Hobart: Ludeke Publishing, 2005). P.31

³⁰ The vines would have actually been in their fourth year of growth.

³¹ *Launceston Examiner*. 18 October, 1886, p.3

As the ship approached Maria Island, rockets and fireworks welcomed them and the bay “looked like a scene in fairyland, for from the water’s edge, an avenue formed of brilliant Chinese lanterns led up to the Signor’s residence” and “on the hill at various points.....brightly coloured fires burned.”³²

The Signor and Signora welcomed each guest and, after “several varieties of wines and liqueurs” moved to the dining room where, as the Crocchia brothers played, “the tables veritably groaned beneath the tastefully arranged edibles, which were of a variety and excellence rarely, if ever, seen elsewhere than in a Parisian salon of the first water.” The Examiner correspondent was straining for superlatives:

*In short, the tables were on a scale of magnificence that even a much travelled member was heard to declare, that the reception and entertainment stood without compare in the Australian colonies.*³³

The Signor was assured of a good press.

The reports of the trip give a snapshot of the vineyards at that time, although all the correspondents were clearly provided with their figures by Bernacchi. Despite his earlier stated intention to plant mainly Burgundy or pinot noir, Bernacchi now had 13,000 fourth year cabernet sauvignon vines in the ground, and in this he was clearly influenced by de Castella and the availability of two year old plants from the St Hubert Vineyard. He also had 4000 four year old vines made up of the varieties golden chasselas, white hermitage, black hamburg and muscatel. There were 3000 three year old riesling vines³⁴ and 30,000 vines in nursery, made up of chasselas, tokay, white hermitage, burgundy and sauvignon.³⁵

³² Ibid. 19 October, 1886, p.3

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Probably first year rootlings either from de Castella or from the Murray

³⁵ *Launceston Examiner*. 19 October, 1886, p.3

Figure 5



A view looking across the rows of vines of wine grapes at Bernacchi's Vineyard Maria Island c. 1890 (Tasmanian State Archives)

There was still considerable skepticism about Bernacchi's ambitious schemes and a grant of £800 towards a new jetty on the island was approved nine votes to five on the second reading, after vigorous debate, which included one councilor accusing members of looking at the question "under the influence of champagne", having all enjoyed Bernacchi's lavish hospitality. The Bill was later voted down in committee. Bernacchi was however more successful in having the Maria Island Leasing Bill amended to allow him to select 500 acres freehold after only two years (rather than five as specified in the original act), as he had already expended £7000 in developments on the island.

In July, 1887, Bernacchi issued a Prospectus and travelled to Melbourne to secure investors for the Maria Island Company.

By this time, sericulture seems to have been forgotten and Bernacchi pins his hopes on wine production and the development of Portland cement. The first object of the company was:

*the production of wine on a large scale, and for which the climate of Maria Island is specially adapted. Twenty six acres have already been planted with the best variety of vines. A large number have been expressly imported from the Chateau La Fitte and Chateau Margot in France and are thriving in a wonderful manner and have already borne grapes this season. Twenty four acres are ready and will be planted with young vines during the present and next month, making in all, fifty acres that will be under vines this year. It is intended to produce certain classes of wines, principally the finest clarets, for which the climate of Maria Island is peculiarly adapted, and which cannot readily be produced in Victoria.*³⁶

Bernacchi's figures appear to be a bit rubbery. He had told the press that 40 acres had already been planted, but this seems now to have been only 26, to which 24 were to be added in new plantings, making 50 acres under vine. There is no evidence of any vines being "expressly imported from Chateau La Fitte and Chateau Margaux", but Bernacchi is not bending the truth too far, as many of de Castella's vines came from Chateau Lafitte. Dunstan, in his history of Victorian wine, quotes Paul de Castella in the *Australian Vignerons and Fruit Growers' Journal*:

*the Sauvignon cuttings came from Chateau Lafitte, as Messrs Barton and Guestier told Colonel Anderson that they sent them from that celebrated vineyard that I may have the prestige attached to the name.*³⁷

Bernacchi told the Mercury in July, 1887 that clarets and hocks would be produced in the next season, the 1888 vintage, and these, together with table grapes, would be exhibited at the Centennial Exhibition in Melbourne.³⁸ In October, a visitor to the island reported that the Italian vignerons were looking forward to the vintage of Easter, 1888, and hoped

³⁶ *Prospectus of the Maria Island Company Limited Tasmania*, (Melbourne: Walker, May and Company, 1887). p.5

³⁷ Dunstan, *Better Than Pommard-a History of Wine in Victoria*. p.25

³⁸ *The Mercury (Hobart)*.

that the San Diego claret would be equal to “the celebrated Comet wines³⁹ of which our fathers tell us”.⁴⁰

In April, 1888, Bernacchi arranged another visit to the island by the Premier, members of Parliament and a press contingent which included the editor of the Melbourne Argus. Bernacchi, with his chief viticulturist, led a tour of the vineyards which were approaching vintage and the various correspondents give us detailed accounts.

The Mercury writer comments on the healthy state of the vines and reports that “innumerable bunches” of ripe grapes were consumed by the party, concluding:

*Whatever may be said to the contrary, as to the outcome of the venture, this fact is established that grapes will ripen to perfection, suitable for wine on Maria Island.*⁴¹

The editor of the Argus, Mr F.W. Hadden, was similarly impressed, writing that:

*a large number of bunches of grapes were picked and critically consumed by the visitors who, when appealed to by Signor Bernacchi, expressed the unanimous opinion that they were thoroughly ripe.*⁴²

Hadden also gives an interesting description of the vineyards:

The two principal vineyards are admirably situated on the slope of a hill, having a northern aspect and capital facilities for drainage, and they are well sheltered from cold winds and boisterous sea breezes....the vines have a healthy and thriving appearance...so far they have never been attacked by disease of any kind.....In one vineyard the varieties cultivated are carbinet sauvignon, golden chasselas, white hermitage, black hamborg, muscatel and riesling, while the adjoining plantation consists principally of the tokay and chasselas varieties. The vines are in different stages of growth, the oldest being in their third year⁴³In the northwest corner of the island another vineyard of considerable extent has been planted, but

³⁹ “Comet wines” were wines produced in a year when a comet appeared and were said to be vintages of exceptional quality.

⁴⁰ *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 25 October, 1887, p.3

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 4 April, 1888, p.3

⁴² *The Argus*. 19 May, 1888, p.5

⁴³ This varies from Bernacchi’s claim that he had four year old vines back in 1886.

owing to the unfavourable season⁴⁴, not much progress has been made by the vines.⁴⁵

The Examiner correspondent has the last word:

In the vineyard first laid down, the plants are really very fine, and the sceptics who alleged that the bunch of grapes plucked by the late Minister of Lands (Mr. N.J. Brown) two years ago had been 'tied on' must have felt....that they had made an egregious mistake, for, instead of a single bunch, there were thousands...⁴⁶

The Examiner also interviewed the chief vigneron, Mr. M. Favelshé, who said he was assured of the industry's success, with the climate "all he could wish for" and his only enemies the magpies, who showed a fondness for ripe grapes.

Bernacchi asked for and was granted space in the Tasmanian Court at the Melbourne Centennial Exhibition of 1888. His display focused on the resources of the island, including the cement, but included wines of that year's vintage, including "Reisling (sic) and Cabernet Sauvignon, or Mouton Rothschild"⁴⁷. There is no record of the wines having been tasted or evaluated.

Bernacchi was keen to develop the tourist potential of the island. He had built a hotel and in November advertised "a new attraction for the tourist" offering "romantic scenery, fishing, shooting, etc." A visitor in May the following year was impressed by the hotel, but less so by the vineyard:

There is a good hotel with an obliging manager; a vineyard, which perhaps in time may produce fruit larger than currants.⁴⁸

In June, 1889, Bernacchi was appointed an honorary commissioner to the Paris Exhibition, announcing that he intended to take samples of his wine to Paris "to have it

⁴⁴ The 1987/88 season was a drought year.

⁴⁵ *The Argus*. 19 May, 1888, p.5

⁴⁶ *Launceston Examiner*. 4 April, 1888, p.3

⁴⁷ "Dio", *Maria Island, Its Past, Present and Possible Future; with an Account of the Maria Island Exhibits at the Melbourne Centennial Exhibition 1888-9*. P.47

⁴⁸ *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 24 May, 1889, p.4

tested by the jurors”⁴⁹ Bernacchi did not go to Paris, and if he sent wines, they won no medals.

In June, 1889 the Agent General for the Colony, Mr. E.M.C. Braddon, produced a report entitled *Tasmania: Its Resources and Prospects*, published in the Mercury on June 27, and in it summed up the history of Tasmanian viticulture to date:

There was a time when Tasmania seemed in a fair way of marching side by side with the Australian colonies in the development of viticulture, but she missed, or failed to utilise, the opportunity, and now while the Australian wines have obtained a deservedly high standing in England, the vintage of Tasmania is unknown.

Many years ago vineyards were established in Tasmania under vignerons brought out especially from Europe, and wine- good wine too- was made. But the industry did not take root and it was only revived (not on the mainland, but on Maria Island, off the East coast) three years ago. The vines have succeeded there, and wine in small quantity, but, I am told, of considerable merit, was made there for the first time last autumn

The quantity was indeed modest, with the Argus in Melbourne reporting that “about 200 gallons of wine were made last year as a first attempt, but this year there will be a largely increased vintage.”⁵⁰ A 1888 vintage of 200 gallons from a 27 acre vineyard planted in 1885, mainly with advanced plants, is more than modest- as a guideline, one acre of productive Tasmanian vineyard today would produce about 400 gallons of wine- so that, even allowing for the youth of the vines, such a miniscule return may have been symptomatic of problems to come.

An Examiner correspondent writing as *La Grippe* visited the island at vintage time in 1890, reporting that

the vineyard is situated on a gentle slope and is of some 35 acres extent. Only two men, both Swedes, are required for its attention. Vines of four, three, two and one years' growth are arranged in rows and look comparatively strong and healthy. They are allowed to attain a height of

⁴⁹ *Launceston Examiner*. 10 June, 1889, p.2

⁵⁰ *The Argus*. 10 April, 1889, p.7

*not more than 3ft.. At the proper age, wire is run along the rows and the vines trained to it.*⁵¹

If this report is accurate the Italian vigneron appear to have moved on- the Swedes are not famous for their viticultural knowledge.

By this time, viticulture was beginning to take a back seat to the cement works.

Bernacchi had ambitious plans to set up Australia's first Portland cement plant, using the limestone deposits of the island, and had built a cement works and limestone kilns.

The Mercury commented:

*The industries of sericulture and viticulture have not as yet proved unqualified successes, whatever they may do in the future, but a new arm of wealth has come to the aid of the speculators who are working upon the island.*⁵²

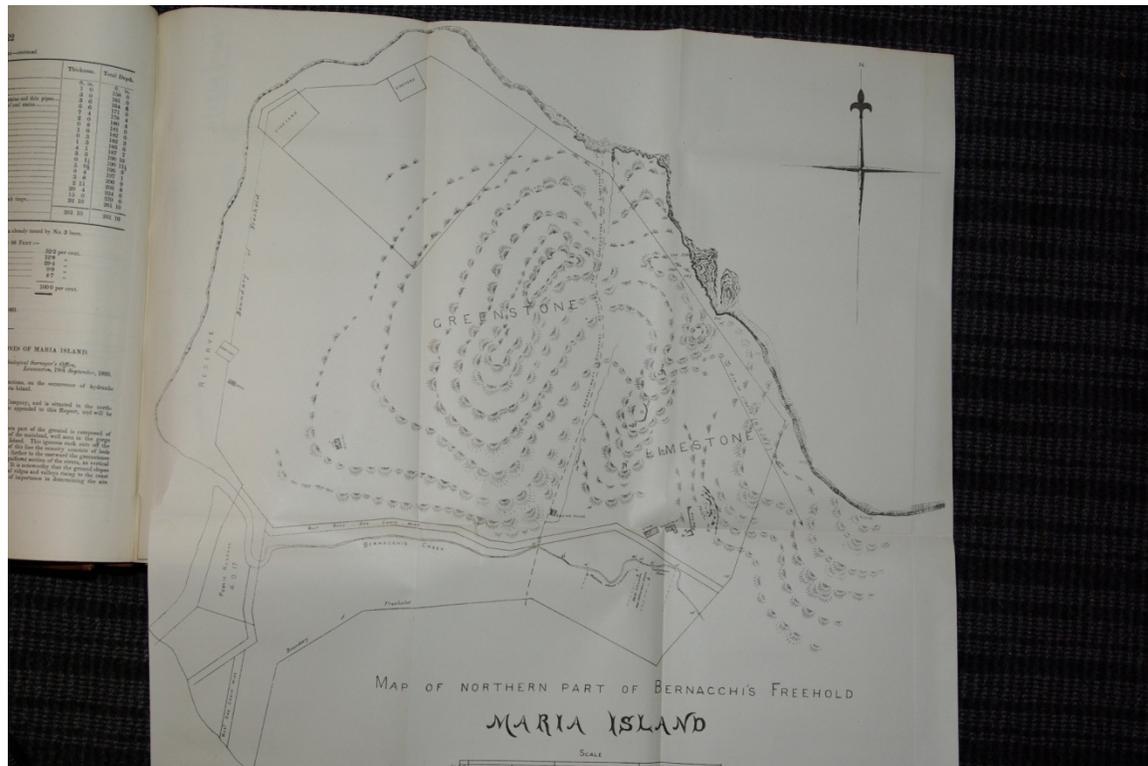
A map⁵³ submitted to the Government at the time, principally to show the location and extent of limestone deposits, also shows the location of the vineyards. This is the first direct evidence of the location and size of the vineyards (shown upper left of map).

⁵¹ *Launceston Examiner*. 22 April, 1890, p.3

⁵² *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 17 October, 1890, p.2

⁵³ *Papers and Proceedings of the Parliament of Tasmania*, vol. 129 (Hobart: Government of Tasmania, 1891).

Figure 6



Map of the northern part of Bernacchi's freehold, Maria Island, showing the vineyards- 1891 (Tasmanian State Archives) Photographed by the author.

Bernacchi himself was still publicly buoyant about the vineyards' prospects. In January, 1891, he agreed to attend the Agricultural Conference in Hobart to speak on the subject of viticulture, and to present samples of claret and hock, made on the island. The wine, he said, needed age, but connoisseurs had "expressed their opinion that when it matures it will surpass any of the Australian vineyard productions."⁵⁴

Bernacchi duly addressed the conference, saying that the 34 acres devoted to viticulture⁵⁵ on the island had exceeded his expectations and that it was proposed to make land available for settlers interested in pursuing viticulture. The Mercury reported the varieties described as "Clarets, Cabernet, Sauvignon, commonly known as Chateau Lafitte, Red

⁵⁴ *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 23 January, 1891, p.2

⁵⁵ Considerably less than forecast in his Maria Island Co. prospectus

Hermitage and Black Pinot, or commonly known as Burgundy, Hocks, Riesling, White Hermitage, Chasselas and Tokay, as well as different varieties of table grape”.⁵⁶

Presenting his claret for tasting Bernacchi cautioned that it was only one year old and that “claret usually required to be kept two years in cask and two years in bottle before one could pronounce with judgement on its quality. They would, therefore, perhaps find that this claret had a certain asperity which all young wines have and they would please make allowance for that⁵⁷.”

If they visited the island, he said, they would see stored in cask some 250 gallons of cabernet sauvignon made last year from three acres of three year old vines. Bernacchi had earlier said that 1890 would see a big increase from the 200 gallons produced in 1889, but this had clearly not eventuated, despite a large area of vines planted in 1885, and so now five years old. The vineyards looked healthy but were not proving productive. Neither the Mercury nor Examiner record the tasters’ reactions to the wine.

Bernacchi had indicated his intention to send wines to the Tasmanian International Exhibition which opened in Launceston in November, 1891, but in the end chose not to do so, wary, perhaps of competing against the multiple entries from established interstate vineyards. The only Tasmanian entry was fruit wine from William Ricketts. In their memorandum, the wine judges urged the Tasmanian Government to reduce the punitive rates of duty on interstate wines, saying:

*The consumption of pure, wholesome and non-intoxicating wines should be encouraged in a colony which cannot produce such an article.*⁵⁸

In April, 1891, Bernacchi informed the Government that he intended to resume possession of the island from the Maria Island Company which had, he said, “failed to turn the island to as profitable use as possible, and in allowing the wine industry.....to be completely neglected”.⁵⁹ The Maria Island Company went into liquidation in February,

⁵⁶ *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 29 January, 1991, p.1

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Launceston Examiner*. 12 february, 1892, p.3

⁵⁹ *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 11 April, 1991, p.2

1892, and the Bernacchi Patent Natural Portland Cement Company was registered in Victoria. Later in the year Bernacchi sailed for London to raise further capital for the cement works.

William Clark, ex Minister of Justice in NSW became a director of the new company and, in an interview with the Mercury in November, 1893, makes some interesting comments about the island's wine industry. Admitting he had been skeptical about its prospects he describes the "30 acres under grape vines" as "in a very magnificent condition".

He then visits the cellars where he finds:

rows of bottles of different classes of wine in various stages of maturing. I am now satisfied that it can be proved to demonstration that excellent wine is already being produced there. We tasted some Riesling, a white wine, and Hermitage, a red wine. There is a peculiar test to be applied to Riesling, for evidence of its value, and that is said to be the appearance of a white star on the surface when poured out, and we certainly did see a white star produced on this wine from Maria Island. My opinion is (if the present stock in the cellar is any criterion) that in a few more years wines –not perhaps of the very first-class in the market, but of a very fine vintage indeed- will be for sale on the island.⁶⁰

A week earlier, the Examiner had interviewed Bernacchi's secretary Tom Bower, who said that they were expecting a very large grape crop next year- "some of the youngest vines are bearing 35 to 40 bunches of grapes each, and there are now about 50 acres of vineyard."⁶¹

The big crop always seemed to be "next year" and never seemed to eventuate.

In May, 1896 "Tasman" writes a letter to the Mercury critical of Bernacchi and includes a comment on wine:

Re wine, I will content myself by saying 'Maria Island experiments' have not taught East coast people wine culture, and will refer Mr B. to

⁶⁰ Ibid. 9 November, 1893, p.4

⁶¹ *Launceston Examiner*. 3 November, 1893, p.3

*Swansea, 30 miles away, where people made excellent wine and sent it to Hobart for sale before Maria Island experiments were thought of. I have not yet tasted his product, nor is it known to my circle of friends.*⁶²

To which, Bernacchi defiantly replies:

*it will perhaps please him to know also that wine culture on the East coast of Tasmania, owing to Maria Island experiments, is not a thing of the past, but of the present, and I shall be most happy to supply him for many years to come with as much excellent and palatable Tasmanian claret and hock as he can possibly imbibe.*⁶³

This was sheer bravado however, and Bernacchi was never able to produce the £5000 worth of wine which would have earned him the Government's £2000 bonus. By the mid 1890s, badly affected by a sharp financial downturn in Australia generally, he was in financial difficulty. He attempted to renew his 10 year lease and to have the £2000 bonus transferred to cement production, but the Bill was defeated in the Legislative Council. The Government moved in and sold property at San Diego to cover unpaid rates at Maria Island and his Spring Bay property Louisville. The family moved to Melbourne before returning to England in 1897.⁶⁴

The resilient Bernacchi was to return to Maria Island in an attempt to revive the cement works in 1919, but viticulture was no longer part of his plan. The vineyards had failed, the skeptics were proved right, and Tasmania was not to see another vineyard for almost 60 years.

Bernacchi has been harshly judged by history, seen as something of a charlatan entrepreneur, an opportunist skilled at taking advantage of politicians and investors. In fact, Bernacchi should be seen as a visionary who realized Tasmania's potential for viticulture and whose only fault was the wrong choice of vineyard site. The other success factors were in place- he imported knowledgeable workers to manage the business and he secured good planting material from de Castella in Victoria. But, like all vineyards, by the time it becomes evident that the wrong site has been chosen, it is too late. Bernacchi

⁶² *The Mercury (Hobart)*., 14 May, 1896, p.3

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 11 May, 1896

⁶⁴ Weidenhofer, *Maria Island- a Tasmanian Eden*. p.45

was frequently promoting the East coast of Tasmania as good vineyard country, and offering cuttings and rootlings to those who would plant vineyards there. Time has proved him correct, and if his energies had been put into mainland vineyards, rather than Maria Island, it is quite possible that we may have seen the beginnings of a wine industry in Tasmania in the 1890s, rather than the 1970s.

CHAPTER 4

“NO VINEYARDS TO PROTECT IN THE COLONY”

Despite promising beginnings, by the end of the 19th century, Tasmania was the only state without a flourishing wine grape industry. South Australia produced almost one million gallons in 1899/1900 and even Queensland could boast 165,000 gallons.¹

There are a number of contributing factors in the demise of winemaking in 19th century Tasmania and this chapter will examine their relative importance.

The first factor was undoubtedly the racial makeup of the colonial population- predominantly Anglo Saxon, and mainly from England.

In 18th century Britain, wine was synonymous with port and sherry- A.D. Francis in *The Wine Trade*, writes:

*It cannot be said that wines other than port and sherry played any great part in the life of the English people: the wines of quality remained a prestige symbol reserved for festivities rather than daily use.*²

Dr A.C. Kelly bemoaned the fact in his 1861 book *The Vine in Australia*:

*It has long been the policy of the British Government to suppress the importation of French wines. The strong, coarse wines of Spain and Portugal were for many years admitted into Britain at a much lower duty than the light wholesome wines of France, and, although the duties have since been equalized, the habit of drinking strong brandied wines and their counterfeits have so vitiated the tastes of the people that a pure wine would not be relished by the majority of the British.*³

This British heritage hardly created a demand for lighter table wines of the type Tasmania now produces so well. Hugh Johnson, in *The Story of Wine* writes:

¹ Laffer, *The Wine Industry of Australia*.p.133

² Francis, *The Wine Trade*. P.312

³ A.C. Kelly, *The Vine in Australia- Its Culture and Management* (Melbourne: Red Dog, 2008). P.1

The Britain they had left behind was the land where port reigned supreme: the very idea of light wines was unfamiliar to almost anyone who found himself in Australia..... the national taste favoured strength and sweetness above refinement- and so indeed did the popular taste in their export market, Britain: a situation which held back the progress of the industry for 150 years.⁴

To make matters worse, even fortified wine only made up a small part of the alcohol consumed in the early colony. As John King wrote to his brother George in London in 1833:

Another great impediment in the management of land, exists in the dissolute habits of most of the old settlers; the low price of spirits a few years ago, and the facility with which they were obtained, have introduced dram drinking; and to such excess is this detestable vice carried, that many who might have lived in comfort and independence, have ruined both fortune and constitution, and entailed poverty and depravity, in the most hideous forms on their posterity.⁵

Looking at the imports into Tasmania in 1847, spirits (predominantly rum and brandy) made up 55% in value, malt liquor 22% and wine only 19%, most of which would have been fortified wine. At the time there were also 46 breweries in the colony. The ban on distillation (local distillation was prohibited in 1838) can be understood in the light of the fact that customs duty made up 60% of total Government revenue.

That great advocate of colonial wine, the Rev John Bleasdale, writes in Victoria in the 1860s:

In 1858 and 1859..... the taste for pure native wine could not be said to exist. Beer, ardent spirits and hot wines held their empire over the people absolutely.⁶

For those who did drink lighter wines, French wines were much preferred to colonial, no doubt as much for their status value as their quality. According to Bleasdale, it was 1860 before colonial wine gained any credibility, at least in the Melbourne market:

⁴ Hugh Johnson, *The Story of Wine* (London: Mitchell Beasley, 1989).p.344

⁵ John King, *Information from Van Diemen's Land- Letter from Mr John King, Van Diemen's Land Company Agent, to His Brother Mr George King* (London: J. Cross, 1833). P.13

⁶ Bleasdale, *On Colonial Wines- a Paper Read before the Royal Society of Victoria*. P. 1

From this point (1860) the history of colonial wine in Victoria dates and starts. Till then no wine, the produce of these colonies, was regarded as a beverage, which could be safely placed upon the table, save with great caution and an apology, and only in a few rare and exceptional instances; and it required considerable hardihood in anyone professing to know aught about wine to assert, in the company of gentlemen, that he could relish any of even our best colonial wines.⁷

Twopeny in *Town Life in Australia* reports that even in the Melbourne of the 1880s, good table wines were hard to find... "I have not seen burgundy half a dozen times since I have been here" and "there is no wine harder to obtain here than claret." Of course "a good deal of sherry and port- even more brandied than for the English market- is drunk here," and finally "the quantity of spirits drunk in Australia is appalling."⁸

So an aspiring vigneron in Tasmania was faced with a community attuned to spirits, ale and porter and strong, sweet, fortified wine. The small market for lighter, table wines was dominated by French wines, particularly champagne, with buyers wary of the "colonial" alternative.

With the advantage of more recent experience, it is clear that sparkling wine was the only style suited for production in the cooler Tasmanian climate, and it is interesting that, in the only two instances of Tasmanian wine being advertised for sale, sparkling wine "in imitation of Champagne" is offered.

To make matters worse, Van Diemen's Land had a much lower intake of German, Swiss and other mainland European migrants than other states- in 1861, this group represented less than one percent of the Tasmanian population, but about 5% of the population in NSW and Victoria, and 12% in South Australia.⁹ To appreciate the importance of this disparity, we need only look at the role played by European migrants in the development of mainland viticultural areas. While some came as free settlers, most arrived as indentured labourers, classified as "vine dressers", many of whom later founded their own vineyards. This importation accelerated after the British Government decided to

⁷ Ibid. pp.6-7

⁸ R.E.N. Twopeny, *Town Life in Australia* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1973).pp.66-70

⁹ Vamplew (ed), *Australians- Historical Statistics*. P.11

encourage the migration of non-British skilled labourers to the Australian colonies in 1847¹⁰. German immigrants provided much of the viticultural and winemaking expertise in the development of the Barossa Valley and the Clare Valley in South Australia, the Hunter Valley, Riverina and Mudgee areas in NSW, and the Rutherglen district of Victoria, while the Swiss were the drivers of viticulture in the Yarra Valley and Geelong areas of Victoria.

While many properties would have had a vineyard for home production, there was little incentive for Tasmanian settlers to invest in viticulture as a major economic venture. A number of other farming and grazing pursuits offered easier and quicker profits. In particular sheep farming was well suited to the Tasmanian climate, large land grants were available and sheep were relatively cheap and required little care. By 1836, there were almost one million sheep in the colony¹¹ and wool was described as Van Diemen's Land's staple commodity. About 700 tonnes of fine wool were sent to the UK in that year, exceeding that exported from NSW.¹²

In cropping, wheat, barley, oats and potatoes were easily grown and lucrative, especially when New South Wales experienced bad seasons through droughts or floods. In 1822, 61,072 bushels of wheat were exported to Sydney¹³.

There appear to have been only four viticulturists in the state who ever held commercial ambitions for their vineyards, and none of these saw it as potentially their principal source of income. Two of those owned the same vineyard consecutively, with Broughton's plans cut short by his premature death, and Swanston's by the collapse of the Derwent Bank and his subsequent financial ruin. George Weston Gunning in the Coal River Valley entertained "the most sanguine hopes" for his vineyard, but, devastated by the death of his only daughter in 1828, put the property on the market with "2000lbs of

¹⁰ Dunstan, *Better Than Pommard-a History of Wine in Victoria*. P.4

¹¹ L.L. Robson, *A History of Tasmania* 2vols., vol. 1 (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1983).p.260

¹² Morgan, *Land Settlement in Early Tasmania- Creating an Antipodean England*. P.65

¹³ H.M. Hull, *Statistical Account of Van Diemen's Land, or Tasmania, from the Date of Its Occupation by the British Nation to the End of the Year 1823* (Hobart: 1856). P.10

grapes, perfectly ripened”. Thomas Giblin had a vineyard at *Claremont* in Hobart and his son Ronald writes that he “hoped at one time to make a vineyard there and go in extensively for wine making. I have heard my father say that he would have been able to realize one thousand pounds a year from this industry had he devoted himself entirely to it.”¹⁴ The vine dressers that Giblin has brought in from Switzerland absconded for the goldfields in the 1850s and Giblin found that he could not devote enough time to the business and so “the vineyard and the manufacture of wine came to an end”.¹⁵

The ban on local distillation, enacted in 1838¹⁶, was a further impediment to viticulture, as from then on the spirit to fortify a wine had to be imported and inferior wine could not be distilled into a saleable product- another disincentive to wine producers. At that time the addition of spirits to table wines was common- even the fine wines of Bordeaux were fortified for export, with the strength of the spirit dependent on the length of the journey.

The end of assigned convict labour in the 1840s would also have had an effect on a labour intensive industry. This labour shortage was quickly accentuated by the gold rush of the 1850s, which affected viticulture as farm labourers deserted the state for the diggings. Land cultivated for crops in Tasmania fell from 169,000 acres in 1851 to 116,000 acres in 1854 and did not return to the 1851 level until 1864¹⁷. Thomas Giblin, who had a vineyard in Moonah producing about 400 gallons of red and white wine annually, was one of those immediately affected. His son William Giblin in *Kith & Kin*, writes:

*For the work of the vineyard, he imported two Swiss peasants, who worked well until the gold diggings in Victoria induced them to abscond. After that the vineyard was neglected and finally dug up.*¹⁸

¹⁴ Giblin, "Unpublished Family History."

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ R.M. Hartwell, *The Economic Development of Van Dieman's Land, 1820-1859* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1954). P.149

¹⁷ Vamplew (ed), *Australians- Historical Statistics*. P.74

¹⁸ Giblin, *Kith and Kin: Some Notes on Our Branch of Our Family*. P.18

Ironically, the mainland gold rush created the first great Australian wine boom. Despite a similar shortage of labour in the early 50s, the demand created by a tripling of the population led to a tripling of vineyard area between 1855 and 1870¹⁹. Prohibitive interstate import duties meant that the boom was restricted to gold mining states and offered no benefits to Tasmania.

Birds were a major problem in early vineyards as indeed they were in modern vineyards prior to the introduction of netting. Several solutions were suggested, the most bizarre of which came from Mr Brook of Melton Lodge, near Woodbridge, who reported success with the use of tethered cats as a bird deterrent.²⁰

Fungal diseases were also a significant problem, particularly oidium or powdery mildew as it is known today, which had decimated French vineyards in the 1850s. This disease seems to have hit Tasmanian vineyards hard in the 1870s²¹ and may well have sounded the death knell for whatever vineyards there were left. In 1878 the Legislative Council was debating the Grape Vines Bill which proposed to ban the importation of vines from the Australian mainland, where phylloxera had broken out. The Mercury reports:

*Mr Crowther spoke of the Bill as a harmless piece of legislation, inasmuch as there were no vineyards to protect in the colony, the greater portion of the vines having been destroyed within the last four or five years by oidium. His own stock of vines had been blighted by the disease.*²²

A number of other factors may have played a part in the demise of large scale winemaking- the temperance movement would have had an influence from the 1830s onward- the Tasmanian Temperance Society was formed in 1836, and the movement gained momentum in the 1850s. Not all temperance campaigners were teetotal however, and many advocated the virtues of wine over spirits. As the great Victorian wine proponent John Bleasdale put it, he hoped to see every labourer:

¹⁹ Robert Osmond and Kym Anderson, *Trends and Cycles in the Australian Wine Industry, 1850-2000* (Adelaide: University of Adelaide, 1998).

²⁰ "Hobart Town Gazette and Van Diemen's Land Advertiser." 8 May, 1840, p.2

²¹ The use of sulphur to prevent oidium was discovered in the 1850s and would certainly have been known in Tasmania, but was expensive and not always successful.

²² *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 19 October, 1878, p.3

*enjoy his hour of relaxation and drink his bottle of wholesome wine at the cost of a few pence, without either the reproach of extravagance or the danger of intoxication. In fact I hope and wish to see the Victorians a healthy, sober, jolly, wine-drinking population.*²³

This more moderate view lost favour in the 1850s as the teetotalists gained the supremacy. Rod Kilner in his paper *Temperance and the Liquor Question in Tasmania in the 1850s*²⁴, believes that in the 1850s, Tasmania very nearly became a “dry state”. There was pressure for the Government to duplicate the Liquor Law of Maine, USA, which prohibited the retail sale of alcohol. Five petitions were presented to Parliament, totaling 10,000 signatures or “24 percent of the adult population”²⁵. No doubt the stumbling block to Parliamentary approval was the fact that the import duty on spirits currently provided more than half the Government’s revenue.

Economic downturns suffered by the colony had a disproportionate effect on viticulture with its inherent cashflow problems and the failure of the Derwent Bank in one such recession spelled the end of Charles Swanston’s viticultural aspirations in 1849.

The grape varieties planted in the early days of the colony would have been in many cases unsuitable for the Tasmanian climate. As Kelly wrote in 1857:

*Vines from all parts of Europe, and the most diverse climates, were indiscriminately mixed in the same vineyard. Much time was wasted in introducing varieties altogether unsuited to our climate.*²⁶

Black cluster was certainly introduced early and advertised as early as 1827 as “superior to any other for ripening in the island”²⁷ Black cluster was thought to be a Burgundy grape²⁸ and was sometimes known as Burgundy in NSW²⁹ Busby believed it to be a

²³ Bleasdale, *On Colonial Wines- a Paper Read before the Royal Society of Victoria*. P.24

²⁴ Rod Kilner, "Temperance and the Liquor Question in Tasmania in the 1850s," *Papers and Proceedings, Tasmanian Historical Research Association* 20, no. 2 (1973).

²⁵ Ibid. p. 88

²⁶ Kelly, *The Vine in Australia- Its Culture and Management*. P.11

²⁷ *Hobart Town Gazette*. 1 September, 1827, p.3

²⁸ McIntyre, "A "Civilized" Drink and A "Civilizing" Industry: Wine Growing and Cultural Imagining in Colonial New South Wales". P.309

²⁹ Kelly, *The Vine in Australia- Its Culture and Management*. P.162

variety of the Burgundy, although a shy bearer and late in ripening³⁰. It seems certainly to be of the pinot family, either pinot noir or its parent pinot meunier and so was a fortuitous choice for the cool Tasmanian climate, although its late flowering makes it susceptible to spring frosts. Vine nomenclature was confused, with the Royal Society's catalogue of plants in 1865 listing Black Cluster, Burgundy noir, Burgundy true and Pinear³¹ Noir as separate vines.³²

Other choices were less suitable- sweetwater was widely planted, and although a prolific bearer, made poor wine. It was described by a correspondent in the Courier as “perhaps the worst wine grape that exists”³³ Other varieties known to be in vineyards were frontignac, syrah and verdelho, all suited to a warmer climate.

A list of vines imported into Tasmania during the 19th century is included in Appendix D.

Climate also seems to have been a significant factor in both deterring and discouraging viticulturists.

Although we do have temperature recordings from Tasmania in the 1850s, the variation in recording methodology makes them unreliable as direct comparisons, so I have turned to the work of climatologists. This chart from the Bureau of Meteorology shows the process of warming in the Southern Hemisphere over the last 150 years, and indicates that the mean average temperature in 1850 would have been something like .7 of a degree cooler than today.

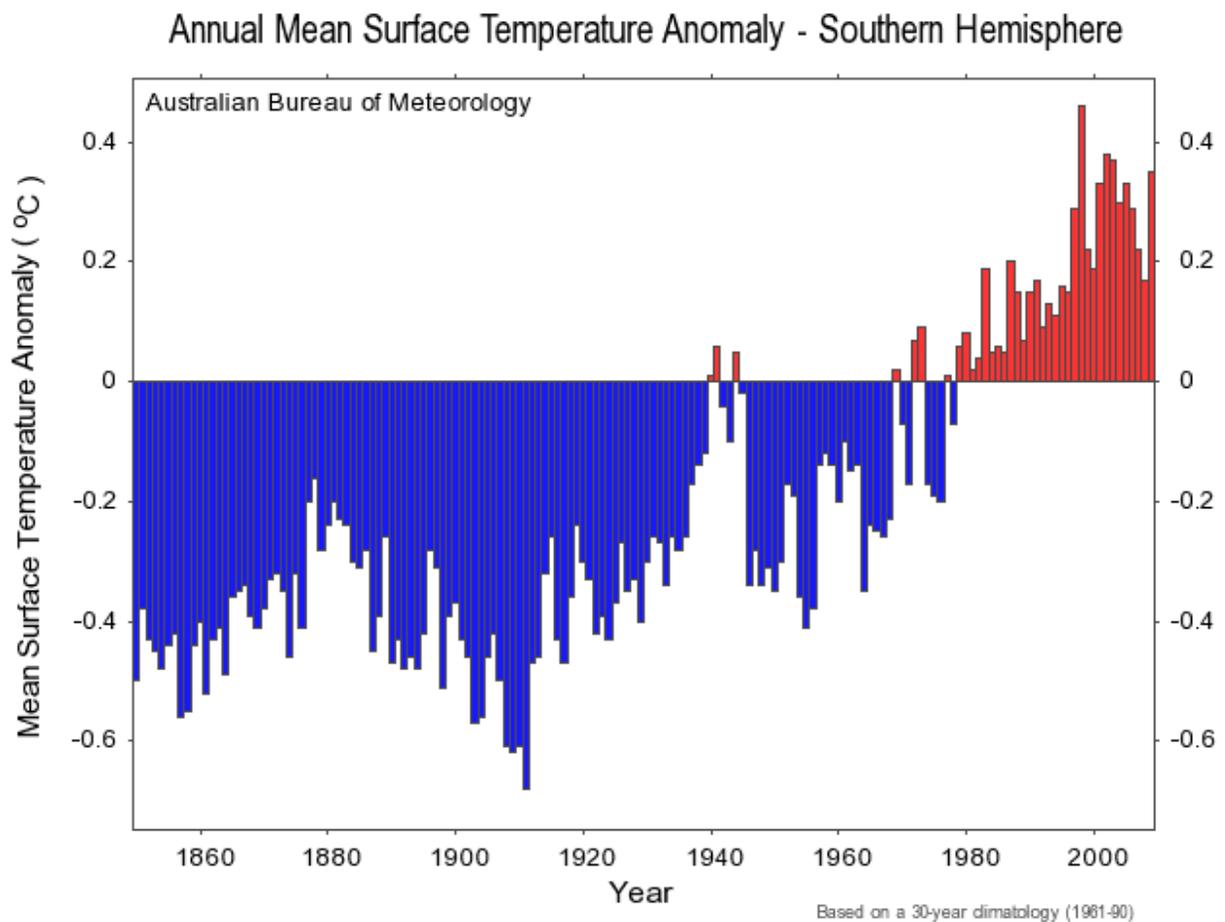
³⁰ Simon, *The Wines Vineyards and Vignerons of Australia*. P.139

³¹ Probably a misspelling of pineau, the old spelling of pinot.

³² Royal Society of Tasmania, *Catalogue of Plants under Cultivation in the Royal Society's Gardens, Queen's Park, Hobart Town* (Hobart: Government Printer, 1865). P.42

³³ *Hobart Town Courier*. 18 July, 1849, p.2

Figure 7



Ian Barnes Keoghan, Climatologist at the BOM in Hobart, estimates that the mean temperature in Tasmania in 1850 would have been between .6 and .8 of a degree cooler than today³⁴. This doesn't sound like much, but is highly significant in viticultural terms in marginal areas. The commonly used climatic measurement in the wine industry is the average mean temperature of the warmest month, normally expressed as MJT or Mean January Temperature. According to Andrew Pirie, the ripening threshold is generally regarded as 17.5 degrees MJT. Pipers Brook now sits at 18.2 and so would have been right on the threshold in 1850. The MJT at Hobart airport now is 17.2 degrees, and even allowing for the fact that vineyards are established in the warmest microclimates in cool

³⁴ Pers. Comm.. Ian Barnes Keoghan, 6 May, 2010

areas, the Hobart region would have been a very marginal viticultural zone in 1850, and even more so earlier. To put these figures in context, the MJT (in this case mean July temperature) for the great French regions are- Bordeaux 20.5, Burgundy 19.6 and Champagne 18.8.

If we do choose to use contemporary meteorological observation, the conclusions are the same. Commander Kaye in Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania in 1854 reports the mean January and February temperatures (“derived from hourly observations at the Royal Observatory, Hobart Town”) for the years 1841 to 1852. The average mean temperature for the warmest month (which varies from January to February) over that period was 16.98 degrees centigrade and only two months (January, 1841 and February 1852) exceeded 17.5 degrees C.³⁵

Gregory Jones, a leading researcher into climate change and the wine industry, wrote in 2007:

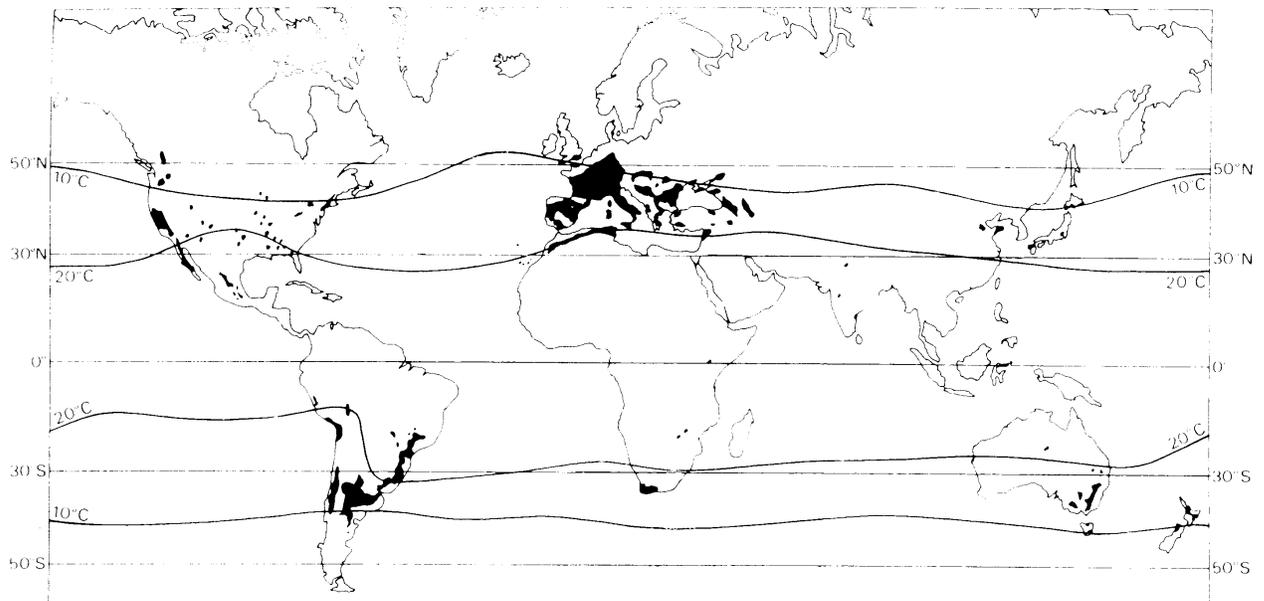
*The (warming) trends have been shown to be more influential on the poleward fringes by providing more consistent ripening climates for existing varieties.....opening up forgotten regions again. Concomitant with the warming trends have come better technology, better plant material, and better vineyard management and these adaptations have allowed growers to meet some of the challenges.*³⁶

Unwin describes the viticultural zones of the northern and southern hemispheres and points out that these move north or south according to global climate variation. It is possible that Tasmania was right on the southern limit of the southern hemisphere viticultural zone in the early 19th century and has since moved back into it as temperatures warmed.

³⁵ Commander Kay, "Mean Temperature in Each Month for the Years 1850, 1851 and 1852, Derived from the Daily Maxima and Minima of Temperature, by Self-Registering Thermometers, at the Royal Observatory, Hobart Town.," *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania* 2 (1854). P.295

³⁶ G.V. Jones, "Climate Change and the Global Wine Industry," in *Thirteenth Australian wine technical conference* (2007). P.6

Figure 8



The global distribution of viticulture (1991) Tim Unwin, *Wine and the Vine-an Historical Geography of Viticulture and the Wine Trade*

The argument that Tasmania is a “forgotten region opened up again” is less convincing on a closer analysis of the temperature change. While it is true that the temperatures today are .6 to .8 of a degree warmer than 1850, most of that warming has occurred in the last 50 years, i.e. since the resumption of viticulture, and the warming between 1850 and the 1950s would be more like .2 of a degree. However, as Jones points out, this difference is magnified by “better technology, better plant material and better vineyard management” and climate would certainly have been a factor in the difficulties experienced by early viticulturists.

There is also a good deal of contemporary evidence to support this hypothesis. In 1855, Harvey wrote in Hooker’s *Journal of Botany* that in Van Diemen’s Land, “grapes just ripen and no more, and are of small size.”³⁷ In 1858, the renowned Hobart gardener Mr H. Lipscombe was quoted in the *Courier* remarking that “at one time he held the opinion that this would prove a wine-producing country, but he had seen reason to change his

³⁷ *Colonial Times*. 4 December, 1855, p. 3

views on the subject”³⁸. And In 1867, arguing for the intercolonial free trade bill, the Mercury writes:

*It will not, we suppose, be pretended that there is any chance of this colony ever becoming a wine-growing country. However luxuriantly our grape vines grow, and however heavily they may be laden with fruit, there is not, as we know to our cost, sun enough to ripen it when heat is most wanted. No longer ago than last year, we know of whole tons of grapes having been thrown to the pigs in Hobart Town and its neighbourhood, there being no other use to which they could be applied.*³⁹

Late spring frosts were considered a problem, even in the north of the state. The Examiner, in its monthly agricultural and horticultural report in 1848, writes:

*A remarkable feature in the climate of this part of the world (is) the regular occurrence of severe frosts at some particular period of summer. In certain localities, at Norfolk Plains, all the fruit has been destroyed for several successive years by a frost which occurred about the first of November in each year, and at George Town also a severe frost has occurred every year for the last 12 years between the first and ninth of December.*⁴⁰

Further evidence can be implied from the fact that Charles Swanston had established a large vinegar manufactory on his vineyard at New Town and, when the property was sold after the collapse of the Derwent Bank, the sale included relatively small amounts of wine, but no less than 20,000 gallons of vinegar “in various sizes and progressive stages of manufacture.” While appreciating that vinegar was a valuable commodity in the colony, it is a reasonable implication that difficulty in ripening fruit sufficiently for winemaking may have been a factor in the production of such large quantities of vinegar.

So, in summary, it is hardly surprising that commercial viticulture failed to gain a foothold in Tasmania in the 19th century.

The state was climatically unsuited for the production of fortified wine, which requires high sugar content, and there was little demand for the styles which could be produced,

³⁸ *Hobart Town Courier*. 28 August, 1858, p.3

³⁹ *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 18 December, 1867, p.2

⁴⁰ *Launceston Examiner*. 7 October, 1848, p.3

with the possible exception of sparkling wine. There was little or no knowledge or expertise in either grape growing or wine making, and sparse European migration, so that “vine dressers” had to be brought in to develop vineyards. As a commercial agricultural pursuit, there were many easier and more lucrative alternatives. Those who did venture into vineyards had to deal with a crop totally foreign to them- coping with often unsuitable varieties, the deprivations of birds and wildlife, damage by frost, years when grapes would not ripen (in a climate cooler than today), and diseases like blight and oidium which were difficult to control. And all of this before they faced the difficulties of converting the crop into wine.

The eventual collective decision to leave wine production to the warmer states was an understandable one.

CHAPTER 5

PASSIONATE AMATEURS

The failure of the Bernacchi vineyard on Maria Island in the early 1890s seems to have been the final confirmation of a widely held belief that Tasmania was too cold to grow wine grapes.

For the next 65 years, apart from backyard vines, there were no wine grapes planted in Tasmania. The state's only contribution to the wine industry during that time was the production of fruit wine and cider and the provision of timber, principally blackwood, for wine barrels.

William Ricketts of Great Oyster Cove was a prominent producer of fruit wines in the 1890s and had a "Tasmanian Wine Bar" at the Tasmanian International Exhibition held in Launceston in 1891-2, selling elderberry, cherry, gooseberry, plum, black currant, raspberry and apple wines, as well as cider.¹

The Mercury visited the Wine Bar and was impressed with the quality:

*Here Mr. J. (sic) Ricketts vends a number of real Tasmanian wines made from fruits grown by himself. He does not confine himself to the juice of the grape, but has literally 'pressed' a number of other fruits into his service, the quality of which bids fair to make the 'King of Maria Island' sit up and look to his laurels...*²

The wines were obviously to the public taste as Mr. Ricketts reported selling "over 530 cases of wine, totaling 15,000 gallons".³

There was considerable agitation over several years for the creation of a wine licence to allow fruit growers (including Ricketts) to sell wine, but without success⁴.

¹ Ibid. 29 January, 1892 p.4

² *The Mercury (Hobart)*.

³ Ibid. 25 October, 1892, p.3

⁴ Ibid. 22 July, 1891, p.3; 20 February, 1892, p.4

There were a number of commercial cider producers in Tasmania in the early 1900s, with the Tasmanian Cider Company and the Southern Tasmania Co-operative Society regular medal winners at mainland agricultural shows.

From the early 1900s there was considerable demand for Tasmanian blackwood for the production of wine casks, with Seppelts seeking up to 15,000 blackwood staves in 1903, to be used in preference to American oak.⁵

When blackwood supplies became limited in the 1930s, large quantities of Tasmanian oak and myrtle were exported for the wine trade. Demand continued to build and in 1947 Australian wine exports to the United Kingdom were limited by the shortage of casks.⁶ In 1949, in a record single shipment, 165,000 super feet of staves for wine barrels left Hobart for Adelaide.⁷

With a firmly entrenched attitude, both in the community and the bureaucracy, that Tasmania was “not a wine growing country”, it is not surprising that the state’s modern viticultural history starts with two European immigrants. Both Frenchman Jean Miguet and Italian Claudio Alcorso came from communities where wine production, both domestic and commercial, was an integral part of their culture. Both were ready to challenge the conventional wisdom that Tasmania was too cold to ripen wine grapes- both had seen successful vineyards in much colder climates.

The distinction of Tasmania’s first vigneron of the modern era goes to Jean and Cecile Miguet, who planted wine grapes at Lalla, near Lilydale in north east Tasmania in 1956. It was the first vineyard established in Tasmania since Diego Bernacchi on Maria Island in 1885.

It seems unlikely that the Miguets had any thought of reviving a wine industry in Tasmania- they were probably unaware that there had ever been one- they were simply

⁵ *Launceston Examiner*. 11 November, 1903

⁶ *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 25 November, 1947, p.11

⁷ *Ibid.* 9 September, 1949, p. 4

doing what Jean Miguet's family had been doing for five generations- growing grapes to make wine.

Research into Jean and Cecile Miguet has been greatly assisted by access to Jean Miguet's personal correspondence over a 10 year period, 1961 to 1971, provided by the vineyard's current owner, Stuart Bryce. Early in 1967, wine writer Ivor Roberts visited the Miguets and based the Tasmanian chapter of his book *Australian Wine Pilgrimage*⁸ on his conversations with Jean Miguet, providing another valuable source. In 1995, writer John Scott visited Tasmania and wanted to include the Miguet story in his book *Before I Wake*⁹. Cecile Miguet¹⁰, deeply suspicious of journalists and writers, refused to speak to him, but agreed to interviews with Stuart Bryce, whom she trusted, with the information to be relayed to Scott. This information is presented in "factionalised" form in the chapter *Tardieu's Story* in the book, published in 1996. In oral history interviews with the writer, Stuart Bryce has recorded his recollections of those interviews.

Miguet was from the Tarn department of France¹¹, near Toulouse, which contains the wine region of Gaillac. Gaillac has always had a strong connection with Bordeaux and in times past was used to add substance to lighter bodied Bordeaux wines. Miguet described himself in correspondence as a "genuine French vintner whose father and grandfather were both connected with the 'great wines of France'".¹²

The Miguets arrived in Tasmania in 1951- Jean, a fitter, had been recruited by Citra Fougerolles, a French company contracted by the Hydro Electric Commission to build the Trevallyn dam and power station. (In an odd coincidence, Miguet knew the father of the vineyard's present owner, Stuart Bryce, who was then Personnel Manager of Citra Fougerolles). When the contract was finished, the Miguets decided to stay in Tasmania and Jean, accompanied always by his soil thermometer, set out to buy a property suitable

⁸ Ivor Roberts and Douglass Baglin, *Australian Wine Pilgrimage* (Sydney: Horwitz Publications, 1969), pp138-142

⁹ John Scott, *Before I Wake* (Sydney: Penguin Books Australia, 1996).

¹⁰ Jean Miguet had died in 1976

¹¹ *Miguet Personal Correspondence*. Focken to Walker report- 'Grape Growing for Wine Making', 5 December, 1962

¹² *Ibid.* Miguet to McWilliams, 10 July, 1961

for a vineyard. In 1955, after many inspections, they found a six acre property for lease¹³ at Lalla, two kilometers from Lilydale and 18 kilometers north east of Launceston. The present owner Stuart Bryce, recalls Cecile Miguet's account of the purchase. Jean was busy with his soil thermometer and arrived at the house to declare that they would buy the property. "But Jean," Madame Miguet protested, "you haven't seen the house yet!"

The Miguets called the property *La Provence* and Jean Miguet began planting vines experimentally- some purchased from local nurseries, some propagated from cuttings taken from backyard vines around Launceston. In 1961, he began to write to mainland wine companies, seeking grape vine cuttings or rootlings. Due to his limited English he used an intermediary for his correspondence, Miss Kay R. Wallace of West Launceston.

The final paragraph of Miss Wallace's letter to these companies read:

I assure you sincerely this is not an idle request from someone who wants to manufacture 'plonk' on the sly, but a genuine French vintner whose father and grandfather were both connected with the 'great wines of France',¹⁴

He received encouraging replies from McWilliams, Seppelts and Lindemans, referring him to vine nurseries and to mainland state Departments of Agriculture. In this correspondence, Miguet is requesting the vine varieties gamay, pinaud and jacquieres, all grape varieties of Eastern France and not common in the Tarn region (or in Provence). He was particularly keen to find gamay, which was not then available in Australia.

The Tasmanian Department of Agriculture, under its Director General Archie Meade, did not take viticulture seriously and actively discouraged its field officers from spending time or resources in that area. Fortunately, the Department had one horticultural officer with a viticultural background. Clive Matthews came to Tasmania and started work with the Department of Agriculture in December, 1958. He was an Honours Graduate of Roseworthy Agricultural College¹⁵ and went on to spend 11 years on the staff of the

¹³ Miguet did not finally purchase the property until 1963, paying £2,300

¹⁴ *Miguet Personal Correspondence*. Wallace to McWilliams, 10 July, 1961

¹⁵ Roseworthy was the first educational institution in Australia to offer specialized oenology training.

College, as well as a year with the CSIRO. From 1958 to 1962 he was based at Cygnet in the south of the state.¹⁶ Ivor Roberts, who met and interviewed both Matthews and Miguet in the course of writing his book *Australian Wine Pilgrimage*, reports that Matthews helped Miguet to identify local grape varieties taken as cuttings, so he was clearly assisting Miguet in the north at this early stage.

In 1962 he was appointed Manager of Orlando Vineyards in the Barossa Valley, where he was responsible for the establishment of their renown Steingarten Vineyard. After 15 months he returned to the Tasmanian Department of Agriculture, this time based in the north of the state, where he provided active assistance and advice to Miguet and other aspiring vignerons, despite the Department's policy.¹⁷ His daughter, Kathryn Barnsley, recalls that Matthews "had a terrible time in the Department, with huge opposition to his work for the wine/viticulture industry"¹⁸

Miguet also received help and encouragement from many mainland wine industry figures and his correspondence includes personal letters from Max Lake, Karl Seppelt, David Wynn and John Brown. John Brown, then General Manager of Brown Brothers of Milawa, visited the Miguets while on a family holiday to Tasmania in January 1964, and subsequently offered his assistance and advice in sourcing planting material for La Provence.¹⁹

In 1962, Miguet wrote to the Attorney General, Roy Fagan, enquiring about the possibility of a licence to sell wine from his vineyard. The Attorney General asked the Minister for Agriculture, Mr. A.C. Atkins, for a report on the "possibility of grape growing for wine making with particular reference to (Miguet's) vineyard"²⁰

¹⁶ Julian Alcorso remembers Matthews as the only Departmental field officer to provide assistance and advice to the fledgling Moorilla Vineyard at Berriesdale. Oral History Recording No.41, 2011

¹⁷ Matthews' District Horticultural Officer at the time, Alan Focken recalls a serious falling out between Matthews and Miguet later in the relationship, as a result of Matthews having expressed interest in investing in the vineyard, an offer clearly made in good faith but misinterpreted by Miguet.

¹⁸ Kathryn Barnsley, personal communication 12 August 2010

¹⁹ *Miguet Personal Correspondence*. Brown to Miguet, 7 April, 1964

²⁰ *Ibid.* Fagan to Atkins, 26 November, 1962

District Horticultural Officer Alan Focken visited the vineyard in December 1962, and submitted a two page report to the Chief Horticulturalist in Hobart, Mr F.W. Walker. A copy of this report is included in the correspondence.²¹

In the report, Focken stated that Miguet had ½ to ¾ of an acre planted to vines, aged between one and four years, of the varieties gordo blanco, shiraz, shiraz blanc and chasselas²², the last three varieties obtained through the NSW Department of Agriculture²³.

Focken also describes Miguet's practice of collecting cuttings from Launceston suburbs and that he has been selling table grapes to the local market. He quotes Miguet's aim to produce either "4-5,000 gallons of wine (good quality) or 2-3,000 gallons (highest quality)" depending on demand.

His conclusion was very positive:

*It is highly probable and quite feasible that a local and successful wine will be produced on a commercial scale due to the integrity and hard work of an experienced French vigneron...*²⁴

The pioneering vineyard was of sufficient interest to the Government to prompt a personal visit by Tasmanian Minister for Agriculture, Mr. A.C. Atkins in May, 1963.

Following that visit Miguet received a letter from the Director of Agriculture regarding conditions of wine production and enclosing a copy of the proposed amendments to the *Licensing Act 1932*.

A Wine Licence was added to the list of licences which may be granted, with this description:

²¹ Ibid. Focken to Walker report- 'Grape Growing for Wine Making', 5 December, 1962

²² In *Australian Wine Pilgrimage*, Ivor Roberts writes that Miguet did not think this was true chasselas.

²³ The correspondence suggests that Miguet obtained five vines of each variety in 1961, either from Premier Nurseries or Weare's Nurseries in Griffith.

²⁴ *Miguet Personal Correspondence*. Focken to Walker report- 'Grape Growing for Wine Making', 5 December, 1962

*A wine licence does not authorize the sale of any liquor other than wine made from the grapes grown by the holder of the licence or from grapes acquired by him and does not authorize the sale of that wine to persons who are not authorized to sell liquor under this Act*²⁵

This allowed Miguet a licence, but restricted him to selling to existing wholesalers, whereas he had of course been seeking a licence to allow him to sell directly to the public, as existed in all the other wine producing states.

In 1963, Miguet imported from Moana Nurseries in South Australia, 50 rooted vines of each of three varieties- rhine riesling, grenache and cabernet sauvignon, at a cost of £7, including fumigation and freight. The following year he imported a further 350 rooted vines of each of those varieties from the same nursery and six cuttings of pinot chardonnay²⁶ from the Viticultural Research Station at Nuriootpa, South Australia. In the same year he was finally successful in obtaining two rooted vines of gamay beaujolais from The Victorian Department of Agriculture's Plant Research Laboratory at Burnley.²⁷

Miguet's relationship with the local community was not always harmonious. The small rural community was not at home with "foreigners" and the Miguets declined to attend or give to the local Catholic Church. Cecile Miguet believed they were known as "the wogs on the hill"²⁸. In her interviews with Stuart Bryce, she also mentioned a number of unpleasant incidents with the local community including the poisoning of their goats and damage to the vines through herbicide spray. The latter is confirmed by correspondence when Clive Matthews sends Miguet a copy of a letter from Plant Pathologist Barrie Thistlethwayte, conveying the results of a soil test. At the bottom of the letter he has handwritten "appears that it was probably 24D or 245T damage".²⁹

We know that Miguet spent many years trying to gain a licence to sell his wine, and gave evidence to the Savas enquiry into the Licensing Act in 1975. At this time he had been diagnosed with leukemia and he and Cecile returned to France, where he died in 1976.

²⁵ *A Bill for an Act to Amend the Licensing Act 1932*, (1963). P.2

²⁶ Pinot chardonnay is simply known as chardonnay today.

²⁷ *Miguet Personal Correspondence*. S. Fish to W.J. Wright, 19 June, 1964

²⁸ *Oral History Recording No. 2* Stuart Bryce, 2010

²⁹ *Miguet Personal Correspondence*. Thistlethwayte to Matthews, 11 June, 1969

In the south of the state, an Italian immigrant, Claudio Alcorso, was also planting a vineyard. While Alcorso and Miguet were both European immigrants, their circumstances otherwise could hardly be more different. Miguet was a French peasant farmer from a seven acre holding in the Tarn department of France and with very limited financial resources. Alcorso was born in Rome in 1913 and grew up in a well to do family with maids, cooks and governesses. He emigrated to Sydney in 1938 and established a successful business, Silk and Textile Printers Pty Ltd. He moved his factory to Derwent Park in Tasmania in 1947 and soon after bought property- a headland jutting out into the River Derwent in Berriedale, calling it *Moorilla*, a Tasmanian aboriginal word meaning “rock by the water”. Alcorso was a cultured and sophisticated man and a great patron of the arts, closely involved with the Australian Opera, The Australian Ballet, the Elizabethan Theatre Trust and the Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board. In 1958, encouraged by his friend David Wynn of Wynns Wines in South Australia, Alcorso decided to plant a vineyard. He was quite unaware that Jean Miguet had planted vines at the other end of the state just two years earlier. He tells his own story in his autobiography *The Wind You Say*.³⁰

David Wynn, whom Alcorso described as the “godfather of our vineyard”, was based in the hot Barossa Valley but had recently bought land at Coonawarra, looking for a cooler climate. Like Alcorso, he saw no reason why selected sites in Tasmania could not produce good table wines. Claudio’s son Julian recalls David Wynn visiting them and commenting that if Tasmania had been colonized by Europeans, the hills of the Derwent Valley would have been covered with vines.³¹ In July, 1958 Wynn sent 90 rooted vines of riesling from his Modbury vineyard to Moorilla. The vineyard was planted and managed by Alcorso’s property manager Guido Toffoli. In 1962, Alcorso picked six cases of riesling from the four year old vines, trod the grapes and fermented the juice in large glass jars. David Wynn thought the juice showed great promise and sent 90 vines of cabernet sauvignon to accompany the riesling. Julian Alcorso remembers a little later the grapes going through a small hand crusher into a large open ended wooden barrel and

³⁰ Claudio Alcorso, *The Wind You Say* (Sydney: Collins Angus & Robertson, 1993).

³¹ *Oral History Recording No. 41*, Julian Alcorso, 2011

fermenting with a yeast culture sent over by David Wynn in wired champagne bottles, some of which exploded in the post.³²

Alcorso writes that at this stage the Department of Agriculture had only “dismissed and even ridiculed” his experiment³³, but Dr Don Martin, Head of the CSIRO’s Division of Horticulture in Tasmania, heard about the trial vineyard and came to look at it, beginning a partnership and friendship that was to last until Alcorso’s death in 2000. The CSIRO installed instrumentation and monitored the climate at Moorilla over the next five years, and Martin became the de facto winemaker at Moorilla, working with Alcorso, the CSIRO research winery at Merbein, Victoria, and with David Wynn.

By this time, Alcorso had established contact with Jean Miguet in the north and Julian Alcorso remembers going with his father as a boy to La Provence where his father and Miguet would converse in French, which he couldn’t understand, but he recalls a typical French farmhouse, with Miguet in his beret, and always bread and cheese and an open bottle of wine on the kitchen table. He also remembers the “Good Friday picking days” at Moorilla, a tradition which was maintained for many years, where family and friends gathered to pick grapes and enjoy a barbeque with some of the previous year’s wine.³⁴

After losing the first crop, a wire cage had been built over the vines to protect them from the ravages of birds, and this was now enlarged to contain 800 vines as the vineyard progressed towards a commercial size. A small winery was needed and again David Wynn stepped in to help, both with the design of the winery and the provision of two 300 gallon tanks.

In 1966, Claudio Alcorso and his wife Lesley, on their annual trip to France, bought a small wine press and crusher from the Vaslin factory in the Loire Valley.

Although Miguet and Alcorso were the first vigneron of the modern era, they were not the first to make wine. The Tasmanian Italian community had maintained their home

³² Ibid.

³³ Alcorso, *The Wind You Say*. P. 157

³⁴ *Oral History Recording No.41* Julian Alcorso 2011

winemaking traditions for many years, using both home-grown and imported grapes. There were many backyard vineyards in the Italian communities in both Hobart and Launceston and container loads of South Australian grapes, mainly shiraz and grenache, were imported to both cities every year, and shared around the communities. John Thorpe recalls being denied access to many of the backyard Italian vineyards when the Department of Agriculture was seeking cuttings in the 1960s and suspecting that the vines had been imported illegally, without going through Customs or quarantine.

Gerardo Demarte was a shopkeeper in South Hobart, who, recognizing the demand for Italian style wines, set out to make them in larger quantities. In 1967, with his son Frank, he set up a winery in the abandoned Women's Prison in South Hobart. On March 23, 1967, he was granted what was reported as Tasmania's first wine licence by the Licensing Court in Hobart³⁵. The fermenting vats were Humes concrete pipes which Demarte lined with glass panels, and other equipment was imported from Victoria, ready to process 2,500 cases of South Australian grapes from the 1967 vintage. Demarte was assisted in the first vintage by an Italian winemaker from South Australia, Vincenzo Berlingueri³⁶, whom he had met through the purchase of his winemaking equipment. It was however, always Demarte's long term intention to import Italian varietals to grow in Tasmania- he believed the East coast or the North East would be the optimal locations.³⁷ He negotiated with the Government to bring in grape vines, as well as 1000 olive trees, 1000 walnuts and 1000 hazelnuts, all of which he believed would do well in Tasmania. Frank Demarte recalls that the Government was prepared to grant his father a long term lease over land in the Huon Valley, but that the plant importation plans were blocked by the Department of Agriculture, which cut short his dream of local production. The winery was named Sorrento Wines and a competition was held through the Mercury to find the best name for the wines. The first wines went on sale through City Merchants distributors on Monday, July 17, 1967, with the release of 1,400 gallons of "Waratah Red" in 26oz.

³⁵ *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 25 March, 1967, p.1

³⁶ Berlingueri went on to found the Settlement Wine Company in the Southern Vales area of South Australia.

³⁷ Frank Demarte, *Oral History Recording No. 31* (Hobart: 2010).

bottles, half gallon and gallon flagons. Three weeks later “Wellington White” was also on the market.

In the early 70s, Demarte was approached by the Greek community who wanted to make Greek style wines, and a range of Greek-style wines and liqueurs was produced under the Golden Age label, with a Greek winemaker brought out for the vintage. A Golden Age bottle shop was set up in Davey Street in, selling both the Italian and Greek style wines, together with some South Australian wines. The venture came to an end in 1976 and the winery property was gazetted a State Reserve as the Women’s Prison Historic Site following acquisition by the Government.

When Jean Miguet placed his 1964 order with Moana Nurseries in South Australia, he had received a reply which read in part:

We have just written to a Mr Robin Wyly whom you apparently know. He has ordered some rootlings and your two orders would just make up one complete woolbale.....³⁸

This is a reference to the third vineyard established in the state, a project that never came to fruition in the sense of producing wine, but which is nonetheless notable for the syndicate of young men involved. In 1963 several young professional men decided to look for a property in the Tamar Valley, suitable for a vineyard. The syndicate comprised Robin Wyly, a brewer with Boags; Guy Green, a lawyer who would go on to become Chief Justice of Tasmania, Chancellor of the University of Tasmania and (as Sir Guy Green) the first Tasmanian born Governor of the state; lawyer William Cox, who was also to become Chief Justice of Tasmania and Sir Guy Green’s successor as Governor; Harry Holgate, who was then a journalist at the Examiner, but was to become Premier of the state in 1981; Tim Bowden, writer and broadcaster, then working for the ABC in Launceston, and two Hobart lawyers, Ian Elliott and Nigel Henry.

The group bought an acre of land at Robigana on the West Tamar in 1963 and set about clearing it ready for the planting of vines the following year. Sir Guy Green’s recollection

³⁸ *Miguet Personal Correspondence*. John Roberts to Miguet, 28 June, 1964

is that Robin Wyly had a copy of Winkler's *General Viticulture*³⁹ which had just been published in Australia and believed that it showed that Tasmania was suitable for wine grape production⁴⁰. Clive Matthews of the Department of Agriculture, provided some advice and monitored progress of the vineyard. Over 1964 and 1965, they planted a wide range of varieties from Moana Nurseries in South Australia, including cabernet sauvignon, shiraz, grenache, rhine riesling, semillon and white hermitage. The vines were close planted and irrigated.

William Cox writes in his *A Miscellany of Tasmaniana*:

*We planted over 700 rootlings of which we were inordinately proud notwithstanding the cruel jibe of a neighbor who insisted on referring to our vineyard as 'that bloody stick farm'*⁴¹

They called the vineyard *Windermere* for no other reason than they held their 'Board Meetings' in the front bar of the Rosevears Hotel, looking out across the Tamar River at Windermere and its picturesque church.⁴²

Sadly, in the late 60s, as the vines reached their first crop, career changes had taken most of the members away from Launceston, with only Robin Wyly still resident. He found the vineyard too much to manage alone and it was sold as a building block- the vines were subsequently grubbed out, never having produced a bottle of wine.

The mid to late 60s saw a small number of experimental vineyards established- surveyor Michael Curtis had a trial block at Legana, and Graham Wiltshire planted vines at the Cherry Farm in Underwood in 1965. Don Martin, as well as working with Claudio Alcorso, was also experimenting with vines at Koonya, near Eaglehawk Neck, Devonport and Bridport, and Bill Mitchell of Mitchell Motors had a small permanently netted vineyard called Tamarway at Gravelly Beach in the Tamar Valley, established around 1969.

³⁹ A.J Winkler, *General Viticulture* (Milton, Qld.: Jacaranda Press, 1963).

⁴⁰ *Oral History Recording No. 47* Sir Guy Green, 2011

⁴¹ William Cox, *A Miscellany of Tasmaniana Selected Vice-Regal Speeches* (Hobart: W.J.E. Cox, 2008). P. 104

⁴² *Oral History Recording No. 47* Sir Guy Green, 2011

Wiltshire's small vineyard at Underwood was decimated by wallabies and eventually abandoned. Wiltshire with his wife Nancy and children spent 12 months in 1966 and 1967 travelling around Australia looking at vineyard areas and considering relocation. His conclusion was that mainland areas were too hot to produce the styles of wine he aspired to. European experience convinced him that, contrary to current opinion, Tasmania was well suited to viticulture, and in 1968 he joined forces with Michael Curtis at Legana to develop a small commercial vineyard. The initial half hectare planting in 1968 was all cabernet sauvignon, with rooted vines (clones 125 and 126) obtained from Redmans in Coonawarra, through the South Australia Department of Agriculture. Cabernet was followed by Riesling, and a little later a number of experimental varieties were added, obtained from the CSIRO at Merbein through Alan Antcliff. These included shiraz, grenache, semillon, clare riesling and muscat gordo blanco.

Significantly, by that time Government and bureaucratic attitudes were beginning to change. Successive Ministers for Agriculture had visited the vineyard and by 1965, the Government was trying to secure cuttings or rootlings from the Viticultural Research Station at Oxted in England. In November of that year Tasmania's Chief Quarantine Officer, W. Walker, wrote to the Commonwealth Assistant Director General (Plant Quarantine), Dr. T.H. Harrison, seeking clearance to import 20 varieties from England to be grown at the Bruny Island Quarantine Station to test their suitability for Tasmanian conditions.⁴³ It is not clear whether this importation proceeded, but by 1970, Clive Matthews of the Department was writing to Jean Miguet, listing 28 varieties of vine being propagated at Cormiston⁴⁴.

In 1967, Dr Bob Menary arrived in the state to take up a position as lecturer in Horticulture at the University of Tasmania, a position associated with a new Horticultural Research Centre set up through a grant from the Electrolytic Zinc Company.

⁴³ *Miguet Personal Correspondence*. Copy, Walker to Harrison, 12 November, 1965

⁴⁴ At the nursery of W.A.G. Walker & Sons

He was to prove an enormous asset to the young viticultural industry, with quite extensive experience in viticulture at University of California-Davis, and in Queensland working with both wine and table grapes.

In 1968, he began to teach a viticulture component in Horticulture I, and soon met Claudio Alcorso through a mutual friendship with Don Martin at the CSIRO. Menary made a significant contribution both to the viticulture and winemaking at Moorilla in the late 60s as well as taking his viticulture students out to the vineyard at pruning and vintage times. He recalls that these early students included Andrew Hood, Fred Peacock, Steve Wilson and Duncan Farquhar, all of whom would go on to significant roles in the Tasmanian wine industry⁴⁵. He also assisted Richard Winspear with the early plantings at Meadowbank, George Park at Campania, Jean Miguët at Lalla, David Pirie at Pipers Brook, Graham Wiltshire at Legana, and Steven Ferentz at Cradoc.

Dr Menary recalls that in the late 1960s there were only two technical people available to assist the development of viticulture in the state- Dr Menary himself, with his viticultural experience, and Don Martin of the CSIRO who was able to access winemaking assistance from experts like George Kerridge and Alan Antcliff at CSIRO Merbein.⁴⁶⁴⁷

The Department of Agriculture was slowly beginning to see viticulture as a viable economic prospect for the state and in 1969, Clive Matthews and T.D Raphael, the Senior Horticulturalist, co-authored a landmark paper in the Department's *Journal of Agriculture*.⁴⁸ Clive Matthews wrote the original paper⁴⁹ which was modified extensively for the co-authored publication. In the original document, he argued that "there are thousands of acres in Tasmania where the aspect, soil type and climate conditions are suitable for grape growing".⁵⁰ He estimated vineyard development cost at around \$800

⁴⁵ *Oral History Recording No. 22* Prof. Bob Menary, 2010

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ To this duo should be added Clive Matthews in the north of the state, an experienced viticulturist who returned to the Tasmanian Department of Agriculture in 1963.

⁴⁸ T.D. Raphael and Clive Matthews, "Grape Growing in Tasmania," *Tasmanian Journal of Agriculture* 1969, no. August (1969).

⁴⁹ Provided to the writer by Matthews' daughter, Kathryn Barnsley

⁵⁰ Clive Matthews, *Grape Growing in Tasmania* (1969). P.3

per acre (exclusive of labour) and suggests that the breakeven point would require a 50 acre vineyard, with the same planting required even if a winery were built, to justify the expense of \$50,000 in winery and equipment.

He concludes with five points:

1. Grapes will grow in parts of Tasmania
2. Certain varieties will produce grapes from which a quality wine of the table type can be produced.
3. Certain pests and diseases are not known to be present in this state.
4. Not all desirable varieties are available in this state.
5. There is a lack of skilled and experienced grape growers and wine-makers.⁵¹

Prophetically he recommends the planting of pinot noir, even though it was not at that time available in Tasmania. In Appendices, he identifies 23 varieties of grape available in the state, principally from the small vineyards at Lilydale, Legana and Robigana (there is no mention of Moorilla at Berriedale) and heat summations for various parts of the state, with their national and international equivalents.

The published version, while more cautious and equivocal in its language, still presents a positive conclusion:

*As for wine producing varieties (of grapes) there is little doubt that, in selected areas, of Tasmania numbers can be grown from which light wines of character and quality can be made.*⁵²

The final factor which was to set the scene for the development of the 1970s was the establishment of two trial vineyards in 1970- one by the University of Tasmania at the University farm in Hobart, and the other by the Department of Agriculture at Rowella on the West Tamar, both of which were experimenting with multiple varieties of wine grape to test their suitability for the state.

⁵¹ Ibid. p.6

⁵² Raphael and Matthews, "Grape Growing in Tasmania." P. 218

John Thorp, then a junior Horticultural Officer with the Department in Launceston, recalls working closely with Clive Matthews in setting up the experimental vineyard.⁵³

The Department first set up 26 two vine trials with people around the state who had expressed an interest- each was given one rhine riesling and one cabernet sauvignon vine obtained from South Australia. Results were patchy but sugar and acid readings were taken wherever possible. It was considered important to establish a reliable clonal collection in Tasmania and the Department began to work with George Kerridge and Alan Antcliff at the CSIRO's Viticultural Research Station at Merbein, near Mildura.

The Department owned no land suitable for a viticultural varietal collection and leased a block from orchardist C.H. Clark at Rowella in 1970. Cuttings of 28 varieties were imported from the CSIRO in 1969 and propagated at the premises of prominent Launceston nurseryman W.A.G. Walker and Sons' who offered the use of their bottom heat propagation beds at Cormiston.⁵⁴ The Department also asked other prospective grape growers for three cuttings of any other imports to add to the trial. This collection was to provide a valuable source of reliable and virus-free material for the coming expansion of the industry.

Viewed from the perspective of an era where vineyards pop up like mushrooms and wine is on every table, it now seems strange that there were so few "hobby vineyards" established in the 15 years after Miguet planted his first vines. We need to remember that in the 1960s table wine was still running a poor second to fortified wine- it was not until 1970 that the production of table wine actually exceeded that of fortified wine in Australia.⁵⁵ The Australian Wine Board had been promoting table wines since the mid 1950s, with headlines like "seafood and Chablis go so well together" and "sizzling steak and claret...wonderful!"⁵⁶, but the focus was still firmly on sherry, port and brandy.

⁵³ *Oral History Recording No.22* John Thorp 2010

⁵⁴ *Miguet Personal Correspondence*. A letter from Matthews to Miguet, 5 May, 1970, lists 28 varieties being propagated.

⁵⁵ In 1970, table wine represented 50.9% of the 109 million litres of wine consumed in Australia

⁵⁶ Valmai Hankel, "'Life Is More Pleasant with Wine" The Australian Wine Board and Its Role in Promoting Australian Wines from the 1950s to the 1970s," *Australian and New Zealand Wine Industry Journal* 24, no. 6 (2009).p.58

There were signs of a growing interest in table wines in Tasmania during the 1950s with the foundation of both the Wine and Food Society of Launceston and the Hobart Beef and Burgundy Club in 1957, but the move would not gain real impetus until the 1960s.

The 60s was the red wine decade in Australia. Sales of red wines were growing rapidly and every company was gearing up for new vineyards, often in new areas. Boutique producers were also beginning to emerge in areas like Margaret River, Mornington Peninsula and the Yarra Valley. Max Lake at Lake's Folly and Len Evans at Rothbury Estate were driving a revival of the Hunter Valley. Pinot Noir was almost unknown- shiraz and cabernet sauvignon dominated the red wine market, so it is not surprising that Tasmania's early vigneronns were focused on cabernet sauvignon as the variety better suited to the cooler climate. Some companies, notably Seppelts and Lindemans, anticipating the continuing shift from fortified wine to table wine, began to look for areas better suited to lighter table wine production- cooler areas like Coonawarra and Padthaway. Development was also on the move in long neglected cooler areas like Geelong and the Yarra Valley. The national climate was bullish, and, even allowing for Tasmania's extreme and sometimes marginal climate, the stage seemed to be set for commercial development, based on the promise of the wines already produced.

CHAPTER 6

GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

With wine consumption in Australia growing rapidly, and Tasmania's ability to make good wine established, the early 70s saw three groups of people planning to put Tasmanian viticulture on a commercial basis.

In the south, Dr Bob Menary was looking for suitable land for a larger scale viticultural enterprise, in conjunction with Claudio Alcorso at Moorilla. In the north Graham Wiltshire was doing the same with his business partner Barry Larter, who recalls that wherever either of them drove, there was a post-hole digger in the boot.¹

The third prospective vigneron was Andrew Pirie, a young Agricultural Science graduate from Sydney University. As a recent graduate he was beginning to look at the wine industry as a career path, and in 1970 travelled to Adelaide to talk to Bryce Rankine, the long term head of Oenology at the prestigious Roseworthy College. His advice- go to France and "drink the wine and eat the food of the regions"²

In 1971, Pirie travelled to Europe and worked for wine merchant Avery and Sons in London, a job which gave him the opportunity to drink some of the greatest European wines.

"It was inspirational to see wines of this calibre and got me thinking- how do we do this in Australia," Pirie recalls. He then worked a vintage with Peter Sichel at the legendary Chateau Palmer in Bordeaux, and, having fallen in love with the region, asked to stay on. He remembers Sichel's response:

¹ *Oral History Recording No.12*, Barry Larter, 2010

² *Ibid.* No 11, Andrew Pirie, 2010

“Sichel said ‘no, you’re crazy- go back to Australia where you’re not constrained by traditional laws and you can do something completely new’, and that was just the push I needed,”³

He travelled through France with two other young men who were to make their mark in the wine world, Oz Clarke and Charles Metcalfe, and began to hear the common French opinion of Australia’s vineyard areas as “too hot for quality wine production”.

On his return to Australia in 1972 he put the question to Professor Michael Mullins, inaugural Professor of Horticulture at Sydney University- why aren’t we growing grapes in Australia’s cooler areas? Mullins suggested it was a good area for a doctoral study.

Getting to work he soon identified several areas which were as cool as the premier wine regions of France⁴, areas with either significant altitude or latitude. Pirie believed that there was more to it than just temperature- factors such as sunshine strength and evaporation rates played their part and this led him to the high latitude region of Tasmania.

In an interview with David Dunstan in 1982⁵, Pirie explained some of the rationale behind his choice, pointing out that, although the temperature profiles of mainland high altitude areas were similar to Tasmania, the style of wine they produced was very different- big wines without much delicacy of flavour. He believed that areas of high humidity and low evaporation were optimal to wine quality and these conditions were found in higher latitudes. The north of Tasmania was the ideal intersection of several factors- it offered areas below 200 metres and less than 50 kilometres from the coast, both of which alleviated frost problems, it was just north of the thirty inch rainfall belt, and it offered deep volcanic red soils.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Pirie’s benchmark French regions were Champagne, Bordeaux and Burgundy

⁵ David Dunstan, "Interview: Andrew Pirie," *The Australian Wine Newsletter* 1, no. 6 (1982),p.3

Pirie's first trip to Tasmania was in June, 1972. He met estate agent Ross Oliver in Launceston, and learned that an American buyer had been looking for vineyard land the previous year and had considered land at Legana.⁶

Pirie also looked at the East Tamar and approached Robbie Archer who had extensive farm holdings on that side of the river. He was offered a block on the north west corner of the East Tamar Highway/Batman Bridge Highway intersection. Pirie, by this time in partnership with his brother David, liked the block and paid a deposit, but eventually withdrew from the deal and lost the deposit on Department of Agriculture advice that the soils were too shallow, although in retrospect he believes that the block would have been "pretty good" and may have avoided the later excess vigour problems of Pipers Brook.

Pirie saw three possible outcomes from his Tasmanian venture. Firstly- disaster because the grapes would not ripen, second moderate success with the production of a light French style "vin de pays" or thirdly complete success with the potential to produce great wines. In an address to the North Launceston Rotary Club⁷ in 1973, he pointed out that the high demand for quality table wine was a recent phenomenon in Australia and that wine quality had not previously been a factor influencing the distribution of our viticultural areas, so cooler areas had been neglected. He saw the possibility of a new industry for Tasmania which "would link the state's name with such world famous areas as Moselle, Chablis and Burgundy".

Even though they had not yet purchased a property, the brothers decided to get started, and brought in 51,000 cuttings from the Agricultural Research Station at Griffith, NSW., which were planted in a nursery block at Low Head in the winter of 1973. These were all white varieties, about one third riesling, one third gewurtztraminer and one third chardonnay.

⁶ This was Ed Barnard, an American with vineyards in the Napa Valley. He had optioned land for a vineyard and was in negotiation with State and Federal authorities to import vines, but was diagnosed with cancer on his return to California and died soon after.

⁷ Andrew Pirie, "A New Industry for Tasmania- Premium Wine Production- Summary of a Talk Given to the North Launceston Rotary Club, Launceston, 14 August, 1973," (Launceston: 1973).

With the Pipers Brook development pending, a meeting of winegrowers was held at the Launceston Hotel on November 16, 1973 to discuss the formation of a winegrowers' association and to work towards changes in the licensing laws which would allow vineyards to sell their product from the cellar door direct to the public. The meeting was attended by the Minister for Agriculture Mr. Lloyd Costello with Andrew Pirie as guest speaker, and nominated a committee to take matters forward.

The first formal meeting of the committee was then held on November 23, 1973 at the residence of Claudio Alcorso at Moorilla. The minutes are headed: "Minutes of a meeting of a committee formed to consider the formation of an association for the advancement of vineyards and winemaking in Tasmania"⁸. Claudio Alcorso chaired the meeting, which was attended by committee members Mel Holman, Graham Wiltshire, Richard Winspear and David Pirie as proxy for Andrew Pirie. Michael Curtis was also present, although not a committee member. It was resolved:

*that an Association be formed and named the 'Tasmanian Winegrowers Association' further that the Association should be incorporated and registered in Tasmania.*⁹

It was proposed that membership should be open to any Tasmanian winegrower with a vineyard of more than .25 ha. and that there should be a sliding scale of subscription. Other business discussed included the need for changes to the Licensing Act, the need for quality control and a registered trademark or seal of quality. The meeting adjourned to meet with the Minister for Tourism, Michael Barnard. This growers association was to become a powerful force in the development of the industry, and grew from an early recognition that the Tasmanian industry must rely on quality rather than quantity of production.

In September, 1973, the Tasmanian Government had commissioned a long overdue Committee of Enquiry into the Licensing Act 1932, under the Chairmanship of Gabriel Savas. Claudio Alcorso gave evidence to the enquiry on behalf of the fledgling

⁸ *Minutes of the Meetings of the Vineyards Association of Tasmania.*, 23 November, 1973

⁹ *Ibid.*

Association on December 13, 1973, arguing for a licence which would allow a producer to sell directly to the public, in any quantity, seven days a week, and reported back that he was confident the changes would be recommended.¹⁰ Jean Miguet, who had been fighting for a licence for his La Provence vineyard for almost 20 years, gave similar evidence to the enquiry on January 30, 1974.

The Savas Committee Report, released later in 1974, recommended sweeping changes to licensing laws, including much more flexible trading hours. Amongst the recommendations, Savas writes:

A well run, locally operated vineyard which could sell direct to the public would be an asset to a rural community. That the success of such an operation would be assured, can be gauged by the fact that at least three Australian states encourage their vineyards to sell direct to the public¹¹

And, even more enthusiastically:

Another reason why local vintners should be encouraged to market their products widely is the real possibility that Tasmania might be capable of producing wines comparable to good quality European wines.¹²

Alcorso's evidence clearly had an impact on the committee.

The committee's recommendations were very largely adopted in the Licensing Act 1976, which gave Tasmania the most liberal liquor trading conditions in Australia. Sadly, Jean Miguet had already been diagnosed with leukemia when he gave evidence to the enquiry and, after 20 years of frustration, he was not to live to see the changes implemented, dying in his native France in 1976.

The steering committee for the prospective Tasmanian Winegrowers Association continued to develop the framework and structure for the group, assisted by Dr Bryce Rankine and Sydney Hamilton of Hamilton Wines, both of whom attended meetings. The

¹⁰ Ibid. 17 April, 1974

¹¹ Gabriel Savas, "Licensing Act 1932- Report of the Committee of Enquiry," (Hobart: Parliament of Tasmania, 1974). P. 13

¹² Ibid.

name was changed to the Vineyards Association of Tasmania, with its attractive acronym VAT, and the inaugural meeting scheduled for October 4, 1974 at the Launceston Hotel.

That landmark meeting was attended by the existing steering committee- Claudio Alcorso, Mel Holman, Richard Winspear, David Pirie and Graham Wiltshire, with the following prospective members; R. Adams, M. Curtis, B. Mitchell, Dr. Findlay, B. Larter, G. Park, R. Power, G. Searle, J. Shoobridge, P. Sullivan, N. Turnbull and G. Scott. Special guests were the Minister for Agriculture, Lloyd Costello, the Minister for Lands and Works, Michael Barnard, and Andrew Pirie. The basic objects of the Association were:

1. To assist in the advertising, development and promotion of the Industry of Viticulture
2. To assist in the establishment and maintenance of standards appertaining to the production and sale of Tasmanian Wine in Tasmania
3. To regulate the labelling of wine made in Tasmania wholly from Tasmanian grown grapes
4. To acquire and disseminate information concerning viticulture and the sale of wine

There was to be a “foundation membership fee” of \$100, then an annual fee ranging from \$10 to \$100 according to the size of the vineyard. Inaugural office bearers were:

Chairman: Claudio Alcorso

Secretary/Treasurer: Graham Wiltshire

Committee members; David Pirie, Mel Holman and Richard Winspear.

The Minister for Agriculture, Lloyd Costello, struck a note of qualified optimism, saying that while Tasmania had a chance to produce wines comparable to the best French wines, the industry must still be regarded as a ‘speculative venture’¹³

The introduction of ‘appellation controlee’ legislation was advocated at this meeting, but was to take another 12 years to fully implement. Alcorso’s focus on quality certainly saw the necessity for such a system, but the matter had been made more urgent by the arrival in the Huon Valley of Max Reynolds, who planted a vineyard which he called Chateau Lorraine¹⁴ near Cygnet in 1972, but was soon importing South Australian wine for sale under his vineyard’s label.

The Chairman also acknowledged the pioneering contribution of Jean Miguet, who was unable to attend the meeting through illness, and it was resolved that he be offered an Honorary Life Membership of the Association. The Association which would come to be known as VAT and would serve the industry well for the next 30 years was officially launched. The official foundation members of the Association were Claudio Alcorso, Graham Wiltshire, Richard Winspear, George Park, David and Andrew Pirie, Mel Holman, Bill Casimaty and Peter Hope.¹⁵

The Association’s membership was boosted by a number of newly planted vineyards. In 1969 Richard Winspear took 200 cuttings of cabernet sauvignon and Riesling from the Legana vineyard, planting them out in 1970 at Meadowbank in the Derwent Valley¹⁶. The Department of Agriculture did not believe grapes could be grown successfully in the Derwent Valley, but a group of farmers employed a young agricultural consultant, Robin Gray¹⁷, to look at new crops suitable for the district and one of his recommendations was table grapes. Winspear reasoned that if table grapes would ripen, so would wine grapes, and in 1975 he planted another hectare of shiraz and cabernet, with cuttings sourced

¹³ *The Examiner*, (Launceston). 7 October, 1974

¹⁴ Lorraine Reynolds was Max Reynolds’ wife.

¹⁵ *Minutes of the Meetings of the Vineyards Association of Tasmania*. 27 May, 1977

¹⁶ The Meadowbank property was bought by Gerald and Sue Ellis in 1977.

¹⁷ A future Premier of Tasmania

through Graham Wiltshire¹⁸. Ralph Power had started to develop the 4ha. Powercourt vineyard at Legana in 1972. In the south, George Park, a Hydro engineer, was looking for a change of lifestyle and, after an unsuccessful foray into poultry farming, in 1971 he and his wife Priscilla planted a small vineyard at Campania, with advice from Don Martin, John Thorpe and Bob Menary, and with a fruit salad range of varieties, obtained from backyards, existing vineyards, the University, CSIRO Merbein and mainland nurseries. This was the second vineyard established in the south of the state. In 1973 they bought 50 acres in Tea Tree Road, Campania and transplanted 700 or 800 vines to start Stoney Vineyard.¹⁹

In the Huon Valley, near Cygnet, Max and Lorraine Reynolds planted riesling on a vineyard which they called Chateau Lorraine²⁰ in 1972, but by 1975 were using a wholesale licence to sell imported South Australian wine under the Chateau Lorraine label, causing some consternation in the Tasmanian industry. This continued for some years- Eric Phillips who was later to found Elsewhere vineyard in the Huon, worked for Max Reynolds in 1977 and 1978. Part of his duties included picking up drums of South Australian shiraz, grenache, muscat and frontignac and taking it to the vineyard for bottling into Chateau Lorraine flagons and bottles. At that stage he recalls that no wine had ever been produced from the fruit of the vineyard.²¹ However dubious its product, it can still claim to have been the first cellar door in Tasmania.

In 1973, Mel Holman, prominent in the establishment of the Vineyards Association of Tasmania, planted a half acre plot at his property Ellis Hills at Spreyton, said to be the highest and wettest vineyard in Tasmania.

In late 1973, with rootlings established in a nursery, the Pirie Brothers were still looking for a vineyard site. Through George Town councilor Bill Timperon, the Piries met Frank Bardenhagen, a Lilydale sawmiller who had for sale a 117 acre recently cleared block at

¹⁸ Richard Winspear, *Oral History Recording No. 38* (Launceston: 2010).

¹⁹ George Park, *Oral History Recording No. 15* (Hobart: 2010).

²⁰ The site is now a stone fruit farm, with no vineyard surviving.

²¹ *Oral History Recording No. 32* Eric Phillips 2010

Pipers Brook. Soil tests were very encouraging and the deal was done in December, 1973 for \$17,000. David Pirie had just six months to clear logheaps, plough in bracken and prepare the block for planting the following winter. The rooted cuttings were planted in June, 1974, with the riesling along the top of the ridge down to the north face, chardonnay slightly north west and gewurtztraminer the most westerly, preserving the east face for later plantings of pinot noir and cabernet sauvignon. Planting followed the French pattern with closely spaced vines and rows just 1.8 metres apart. White varieties were planted first as they could be bottled and sold within four months of picking, providing a quick cash flow. With only about 5,000 vines planted in the state to this time, this 20 acre block represented a tenfold growth in Tasmania's vineyard area. The vineyard establishment was largely managed by David Pirie, with Andrew still based in Sydney, and also returning to France for two months on a French Government scholarship to study the latest developments in vineyard design, trellising methods and wine making techniques. A small block of pinot noir was planted in 1975- a clone from Tyrrell's thought to have originated from the vines brought in by Busby- and cabernet followed in 1976.

Just as significant as the Pipers Brook development itself was the publicity it generated- viticulture was finally on the front pages of Tasmanian newspapers- the Examiner's page one headline read "N. Tasmania chosen for Vineyard" and went on to quote Andrew Pirie's vision for Tasmania as a premium wine growing area²². Nationally, the National Times dedicated a page to the story "Scientist's Choice: the Bordeaux of Australia is the hills of Launceston"²³ with Kevon Kemp interviewing Andrew Pirie. In Melbourne, the Herald announced "At Launceston, they're taking on the French at wine"²⁴.

This local and national media coverage gave the fledgling industry a credibility it had previously lacked, and this was complemented by the solid science behind Pirie's PhD. The coverage had an effect in many areas- Government and bureaucracy, potential

²² *The Examiner*. 27 December, 1973

²³ *National Times*, (Canberra).December 24-29, 1973, p.28

²⁴ *The Herald*, (Melbourne).February 16, 1974

investors and the larger Australian wine industry all began to take note of Tasmanian developments.

By this time Graham Wiltshire and Michael Curtis had more than 5,000 vines planted at Legana and were searching seriously for the right site for a larger vineyard project. Their wines, particularly the cabernet sauvignon²⁵, had begun to attract favourable attention, and amongst their admirers were two Sydney to Hobart yachtsmen Bill Fesq and Colin Haselgrove. Fesq owned a major wine agency and import business in Sydney and Haselgrove had recently retired as Managing Director of Reynella in South Australia. Early in 1974, they approached Wiltshire and Curtis, offering to provide investment funds and expertise to a new joint venture vineyard. Wiltshire and his business partner Barry Larter began an intensive search for vineyard land in the Tamar Valley/Pipers Brook area. Barry Larter recalls inspecting a block in Pipers Brook and seeing David Pirie across the fence, preparing the ground for the adjoining Pipers Brook vineyard. The 90 hectare block, owned by Launceston chiropractor Hans Mueller, was purchased in 1974, after approval by Haselgrove. A limited company, Fesq, Haselgrove and Wiltshire, was formed, with Fesq as Chairman, Haselgrove as Director and Wiltshire as Director and Company Secretary. Wiltshire was to be Operational Manager in the development of the vineyard with Haselgrove providing viticultural and wine making advice, The name *Heemskerk* was suggested by Bill Fesq, after one of the ships on Abel Tasman's voyage of discovery to Tasmania in 1642. A local company, Tasvin Pty. Ltd., was also formed with Wiltshire, Larter and Diana Ramsay²⁶ as Directors- this company was in turn a shareholder in Fesq, Haselgrove and Wiltshire.

20 hectares of the property was planted to vineyard in 1975, with Haselgrove dictating the wider row spacings used on the mainland rather than the French style closer planting used on the neighbouring Pipers Brook. Major plantings were cabernet sauvignon, which came from Legana, riesling and chardonnay, with minor plantings of pinot noir, malbec, merlot, muller thurgau, chenin blanc and gewurtztraminer.

²⁵ The first wines were made in 1972 in a shed on the property- a small winery was built in 1973

²⁶ Diana Ramsay was daughter of Sydney Hamilton of Richard Hamilton Wines in South Australia.

In the south Dr Bob Menary of the University of Tasmania had been similarly looking for good viticultural land. Dr Menary had arrived in Tasmania in 1967 and had been an enthusiastic supporter and advocate of the young industry in this state, establishing a good clonal collection and working closely with Moorilla Estate. In 1973 he met with Mr C.H. Allanby who had a sheep property at Bream Creek near Marion Bay. After some months negotiation Mr Allanby agreed to sell the property- one of the conditions was that his son Colin be involved in the vineyard project. In August 1973, Bream Creek Pty. Ltd. was set up, with Bob Menary and Claudio Alcorso as equal partners. The fruit from the vineyard was to be sold to Moorilla. A small number of investors were invited to contribute and the vineyard was substantially planted in 1974 and 1975²⁷. Varieties included cabernet sauvignon 1255, riesling cabernet franc, malbec 771, muller thurgau, chardonnay, sauvignon blanc, pinot gris, gewurtztraminer, shiraz and pinot noir. Shareholders included David Wynn, George Wade, Jim Shoebridge, Ian Downing, John Scott, John Harrison and Don Finlay. There was a formal agreement that Bream Creek would sell grapes to Moorilla Estate at \$500 per tonne (indexed) and would receive 12.5% of the proceeds of wine sales. Menary used his research background in irrigation at University of California Davis to design a drip irrigation and nutrient feeding system for the entire vineyard.

In 1974, in an atmosphere of optimistic publicity for the Tasmanian wine industry, the Department of Agriculture began to take an interest and agreed to work with the University and the CSIRO to set up a nursery at Sandford which could supply reliable, virus-free planting stock for prospective vine growers, and at the same time research optimal vineyard management techniques for Tasmanian conditions. A trial vineyard was established on the property of B. Haynes and N. Chancellor in 1975, with 12 cultivars introduced to look at management systems, cultivar evaluation, irrigation, pruning and harvesting. All the cuttings were certified virus-free material from CSIRO at Merbein. Subsequently, in 1978, there were 59 clones planted, including 10 of the latest pinot noir clones introduced into Australia.

²⁷ A small planting of cabernet sauvignon was made in 1974.

The first General meeting of the Vineyards Association of Tasmania was held at the Ball and Chain restaurant in Hobart on October 7, 1975 and was attended by Claudio Alcorso (as Chairman), Graham Wiltshire (secretary) Bob Menary, George Park, Bill Casimaty, Mel Holman, Richard Winspear, David Pirie, Michael Curtis and Peter Hope. Apologies were received from Bill Mitchell and Graham von Bibra²⁸. The meeting recorded with regret the recent death of Jean Miguet in France and proposed the creation of a perpetual trophy in his name at the newly established wine section of the Royal Hobart Show²⁹. A paper by Andrew Pirie “Recommendations re Tasmanian Quality Control” was tabled, and it was agreed that Government support would be needed, with Claudio Alcorso to take up the matter with the Premier. Although not mentioned in the minutes, these concerns were obviously magnified by the practices of Huon Valley vigneron Max Reynolds, who was by this time importing South Australian wine and selling it under his Tasmanian *Chateau Lorraine* label. Interestingly, it was resolved at the same meeting that Mr Max Reynolds be invited to become a member of VAT.³⁰

The meeting concluded with a dinner where the members were joined by Committee members of the Royal Agricultural Society and the visiting judges for the inaugural Hobart Wine Show. The introduction of a wine section at the annual Hobart Show was to become an important aid to the Tasmanian industry in providing an annual quality benchmark for the state’s vignerons. It was an initiative of Eric Grey and the Director of the Royal Agricultural Society of Tasmania, Colin Trappes. A special section for Tasmanian wines was included. There were 392 wines entered for the inaugural show (just five from Tasmania) and the judging took place on October 7, 8 and 9, 1975. The panel of judges for the first show was chaired by Bill Chambers of Rutherglen and included Max Lake, who was to become Chairman in 1976 and remain involved with the show for 30 years³¹, R. Turkington and George Kerridge from the CSIRO at Merbein, who had been providing a lot of technical advice to Moorilla Estate. Graham Wiltshire

²⁸ Von Bibra was head of a syndicate which had recently purchased La Provence from Jean and Cecile Miguet.

²⁹ The Jean Miguet Trophy was first presented in 1977.

³⁰ *Minutes of the Meetings of the Vineyards Association of Tasmania*. October 7, 1975.

³¹ From 1976 Max Lake missed only one year as Chairman- 1977 when John Stanford was Chairman of Judges. Lake retired in 1997.

and Richard Winspear were the two Tasmanian associate judges. The Moorilla Estate Trophy for the best Tasmanian wine of the show was won by the trophy donor, Moorilla Estate. Max Lake singled out the Moorilla cabernet sauvignon as a wine which could without doubt hold its own with the top Australian wines. From 1977 the Tasmanian classes were discontinued and experimental classes introduced for smaller volume producers from anywhere in Australia.

The VAT general meeting welcomed two new members, Bill Casimaty and Peter Hope. Peter Hope, from the rural department of the ABC became interested in the potential for viticulture in the state and carried out his own climate research, comparing southern Tasmania with the French viticultural areas. This work indicated the Coal River valley area as optimal vineyard country. In the early 70s he approached Bill Casimaty who owned the Strathayr property near Richmond. Casimaty was interested in diversification and consulted with a neighbor in a Victorian turf growing venture, John Purbrick of Chateau Tahbilk. Purbrick advised a cautious approach, starting initially with a small trial vineyard. In 1975, seven varieties were planted in a one hectare plot- riesling, chardonnay, pinot gris, muller thurgau, pinot noir, cabernet sauvignon and shiraz. There were many problems with possums and bird damage which had to be overcome. Wines were made by Graham Wiltshire, but the experimental period was to be a long one, with commercial development not starting until 1988.

Another early vigneron, soon to join VAT, was a Hungarian migrant Steve Ferencz, who had arrived in Australia in 1949 and moved to Tasmania in 1962. He pioneered the production of yoghurt in Tasmania, selling his business in 1971 and moving to a craft he had grown up with in Europe- winemaking. He bought land at Cradoc in the Huon Valley and in 1974, planted cabernet sauvignon, pinot noir and muller thurgau, later adding chardonnay and riesling on what he called Panorama Vineyard. He foreshadowed the organic movement with a totally pesticide free vineyard regime and became a highly skilled winemaker and active member of VAT.

The State Government had been working on revisions to the Licensing Act ever since the Savas Report was brought down in 1974, and the revised act was introduced to Parliament in October, 1976. The new act was to involve a very substantial liberalization of the state's licensing laws but the most controversial aspect was to restrict the use of wholesale licences for sales to the public. This had been a long established tradition in Tasmania which had been exploited by some in recent years (notably Coles' Liquorland group) to set up retail liquor stores using a wholesale licence, with the only restriction being a 2 gallon or 12 bottle minimum purchase. The new act proposed to limit wholesale licenceholders' sales to the public to 10% of their total turnover.³²

The legislation also provided for a single bottle "cellar door" licence, but included in the small print was the right for Tasmanian vineyards to blend up to 50% of wine from elsewhere and still sell the product as Tasmanian wine. Max Reynolds, who was already importing South Australian wine, had been lobbying for this provision and had convinced some politicians that the right to blend was essential for the economic survival of the Tasmanian industry, given the state's marginal climate. This argument, not an unreasonable one, had plenty of historical precedent, with even Bordeaux in times past importing wine from warmer regions to fill out the poorer vintages. It was however rather at odds with Reynolds' practice of importing 100% mainland wine and labeling it Tasmanian. Both the Vineyards Association of Tasmania³³ and the Coal River Products Association³⁴ had objected to the 50/50 provision in the Act, but the legislation had passed the Legislative Assembly.

Peter Hope, a shareholder in Bill Casimaty's trial vineyard at Strathayr, recalls walking back from the weather bureau to the ABC and deciding to go through Parliament House³⁵. In the foyer he saw Max Reynolds talking to Legislative Councillor Peter Hodgman. His suspicions aroused, he phoned another MLC, Peter McKay, who told him that the legislation to allow blending of Tasmanian wine had passed the lower house and

³² Public reaction forced a backdown on this legislation after it was defeated in the Legislative Council.

³³ *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 21 October, 1976, p.3

³⁴ *Ibid.* 22 October, 1976, p.9

³⁵ *Oral History Recording No.36*, Peter Hope, 2011

would be coming before the Legislative Council in the next few days- Reynolds had clearly been lobbying for the 50/50 provision. Hope decided that the industry should do its own lobbying, and McKay offered to set up a meeting with Legislative Councillors to allow the industry to put its case. Hope immediately contacted Claudio Alcorso, asking him to attend and bring his best wine. Alcorso in particular had been steadfast and vocal in his opinion that Tasmanian wine should be seen as something special and precious, and that blending of this sort would be destructive to its future premium brand image.

Hope then phoned fellow Strathayr shareholder John Purbrick of Chateau Tahbilk, who agreed to fly down in his private aircraft for the meeting. The meeting took place at 3pm on Tuesday, November 3 and was well attended by Legislative Councillors. John Purbrick, Claudio Alcorso and Don Martin all spoke on the potentially damaging effect of blending for the future of the Tasmanian industry, and in a tasting, mainland wines were compared to some examples from Moorilla.

On Tuesday, November 9, the bill came before the Legislative Council. The 50/50 blending provision was defeated nine votes to seven on a division. A proposal to allow the Licensing Board to vary the proportion season by season was defeated ten votes to six. Peter McKay proposed an amendment that Tasmanian wine must contain at least 70% Tasmanian content³⁶ and this was supported.³⁷ Peter Hodgman responded that this “represented a death warrant to the future expansion of the local industry”.³⁸

The decision was also criticized by both the Tasmanian Tourist Council and the Huon Tourism Council, with TTC chairman Roger Valentine saying that the amendment could “close the Chateau Lorraine vineyard at Cygnet and prevent other vineyards from developing.”³⁹

On the Bill’s return to the House of Assembly, that house rejected the Legislative Council’s 70% amendment, and the situation reverted to the status quo, which provided

³⁶ The VAT had been seeking an 80% Tasmanian content.

³⁷ *Legislative Council- Votes & Proceedings*, vol. 43 (Hobart: Parliament of Tasmania, 1976).p.255

³⁸ *The Mercury (Hobart)*., 10 November, 1976, p.1

³⁹ *Ibid.* 11 November, 1976, p.7

that at least 80% of a wine sold under a Tasmanian producer's licence must come from Tasmanian grapes, and that at least 50% must come from the licensed property itself.⁴⁰ The Licensing Act 1976 was passed on November 11, and finally endorsed by the Legislative Council on November 16, 1976.

The 1976 legislation was important to Tasmanian viticulture from two points of view- the restriction on blending in wine from other regions and the long awaited creation of a "cellar door" licence, allowing wine producers to sell individual bottles to their customers from their own vineyards.

In many ways it was a crossroads for the industry. The ability to import and blend mainland wine would have made local wine production more profitable in the short term, but its opponents had the vision to see that it would dilute the state's unique marketing potential, and was of course completely incompatible with the drive to appellation, being led by Alcorso and Wiltshire. Tasmania was to take the harder path, but the path that would lead to eventual recognition as a unique premium cool climate wine region.

In 1977 the Tasmanian Department of Planning and Development asked the Rural Finance and Settlement Commission of Victoria to carry out an assessment of the viability and potential of wine grape production in Tasmania. Agricultural scientist R.S. Harper and chartered accountant R.G. Dick visited all the vineyards in Tasmania with local horticultural officer John Thorp. While confirming that wine grapes could be successfully grown in Tasmania, the consultants were less optimistic about the financial viability of a Tasmanian wine industry, in the context of an Australian oversupply of premium grape varieties. They recommended the continuation of Department of Agriculture field trials, and the establishment of trial plots on commercial vineyards, but suggested that "financial support to prospective producers be limited until the prospects of a successful industry are more fully assessed."⁴¹ The report also includes a submission

⁴⁰ *Proceedings of the House of Assembly*, (Hobart: Parliament of Tasmania, 1976). P.457

⁴¹ R.S. Harper and R.G. Dick, "Report- Wine & Grape Production in Tasmania," (Melbourne: 1977).p.4

from the Pirie brothers outlining establishment costs and financial projections for the Pipers Brook vineyard.

With appropriate legislation in place, an industry association established and three commercial sized vineyards under development, the industry was about to move into a long learning and growth period through the often painful method of trial and error.

Australia was entering a period of “Europeanisation”, moving from tea drinking to coffee and from fortified to table wines. This period saw the liberalisation of liquor laws and the Trades Practices Act of 1974 which led to the rise of liquor chain stores and widespread wine discounting. In addition, the 1970s saw the introduction of the “wine in a box” or cask wine, which boosted demand at the bottom end of the market and converted many to wine drinking.⁴²

There were many reasons to be optimistic. Table wine consumption in Australia almost doubled in the 1970s, from 8.9 litres per person in 1970 to 17.3 litres in 1980.⁴³ There was an explosion of new boutique wineries throughout the country, weaning consumers away from the big brands for quality wine- it was estimated that by the mid 1970s, there were 144 new small wineries in Australia⁴⁴. And finally, the big increase was in sales of white wine, a style well suited to the Tasmanian climate.

On the other hand, the mainland boutique vineyard explosion was predominantly in established viticultural areas, where varieties and management techniques had been developed over many years. Tasmania was uncharted territory.

⁴² Kym Anderson and Robert Osmond, *Trends and Cycles in the Australian Wine Industry, 1850 to 2000* (Adelaide: Centre for International Economic Studies, University of Adelaide, 1998). P.11

⁴³ Beeston, *Concise History of Australian Wine*. P.251

⁴⁴ Brian Croser, "Paper Presented to the Wine and Food Society of Australia," (Sydney: 1988).

CHAPTER 7

THE HARD YARDS

The first commercial vintage at Pipers Brook was not until 1979, but in 1978 Andrew Pirie was working at Charles Sturt University, Riverina, and took a 20 litre container of Pipers Brook riesling juice with the same quantity of Legana cabernet to the campus for winemaking. The Pipers Brook Riesling was picked on April 8, with a baume of 11.2 and a pH of 2.9- a promising start. Pirie later described the wines in *Wine and Spirit Buying Guide*¹, saying that the Legana cabernet had “magnificent Bordeaux-style fruit” while the Pipers Brook riesling was “more Alsatian than Australian”. Working with these wines was to give Pirie some practical experience at winemaking and to introduce Tasmanian wine to the Riverina campus where Tony Jordan, Brian Croser and Andrew Hood were working.

With the 1979 vintage promising a big jump in yield as the three biggest vineyards came into full production, work was accelerating on establishing a “Certificate of Origin” for Tasmanian wine. Max Reynolds, who by this time had also acquired La Provence vineyard in the north, was continuing to import and sell South Australian wine from Chateau Lorraine vineyard in the Huon Valley. In an attempt to draw him into the fold, the VAT had invited him to join, and he first appears in the minutes at the Annual General Meeting held on January 26, 1978, when he was elected to the Committee of Management.² At that meeting he became Convenor of a Standing Committee to report on matters pertaining to the Licensing Act and the Food and Drugs Act. He reported the activity of that meeting on May 27, but his membership appears to have been shortlived, and the last meeting he attended was on October 11, when John Thorp presented the Department of Agriculture’s plan for the establishment of appellation control for the

¹ Andrew Pirie, "The '78 Vintage- Tasmania," *Wine and Spirit Buying Guide*, no. July (1978).p.13

² *Minutes of the Meetings of the Vineyards Association of Tasmania*. 26 January, 1978 p.3

Tasmanian wine industry.³ This was clearly the parting of the ways for Reynolds and in October we see him announcing the formation of the Tasmanian Winemakers Council⁴ with himself as President and Brian Nicholls, a shareholder in La Provence, as Secretary.⁵

John Thorp was the principal driver for appellation within the Department of Agriculture and proposed a scheme for a Tasmanian Government Certificate of Origin, with growers required to provide details of vineyard crops and cellar records, and the wines to be assessed by a panel made up of wine growers and Department nominees.

The Government wheels turned slowly however, and at the VAT AGM on the 9th of May, 1979 the Chairman, Claudio Alcorso, expressed disappointment at the lack of progress being made towards the Certificate of Origin. A sub committee was formed to pursue discussions with the Department of Planning and Development.

This meeting took place the following week, on May 14. Representing the industry were Claudio Alcorso, Bob Menary, Robert Haselgrove, Andrew and David Pirie and Graham Wiltshire. They made their case forcefully- the industry was on the brink of larger scale production- volume should reach 300,000 bottles by 1982 and growers were concerned both for the protection of their product and the protection of the consumer. They believed that “inferior wines could be imported from other areas and sold under Tasmanian place names, inferring that the wine was made or produced in Tasmania”⁶. They suggested a Certificate of Origin for a trial period of three years with participation on a voluntary basis. If this was successful it could be expanded into a fuller form of Appellation Controlee. Peter Sinclair of the Department of Planning and Development offered to convene a meeting of Heads of the Departments of Agriculture, Health and Labour and Industry and things were finally under way. Meanwhile, all the industry could do was warn the consumer and Andrew Pirie in the national *Wine and Spirit Buying Guide* in 1978 wrote

³ Ibid. 11 October, 1978, pp3-4.

⁴ *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 19 October, 1978, p.13

⁵ The organization claimed 20 members, but no more was heard of it.

⁶ *Minutes of the Meetings of the Vineyards Association of Tasmania*. May 14, 1979

If you wish to taste the style of wine produced in Tasmania be sure to look for the words 'Tasmanian wine' on the label. Some wine is available in Tasmania which is not made from Tasmanian grapes and which does not reflect the true quality of wines produced from fruit grown in this cool climate.⁷

The first Certificates of Origin would be awarded in 1980.

1979 was a warm year with 35 degree January temperatures bringing on early ripening- chardonnay, sylvaner and gewurtztraminer were ripe at both Pipers Brook and Moorilla by March 25. Pipers Brook picked five tonnes, nearly all riesling, Bream Creek almost two, with Heemskerk a year behind the other vineyards, but picking a commercial quantity. The first Pipers Brook wine, a 1979 riesling, was released in September at \$4 per bottle.

As an illustration that Tasmania had more to learn from Europe than from the mainland, all three major vineyards had representatives in France later in 1979- Graham Wiltshire, Claudio Alcorso and Andrew Pirie all travelled to Europe.

The industry continued to expand with the first vineyards established on the East coast in 1979. Geoff Bull was a newspaper photographer who took up abalone diving in the 1970s⁸. Looking for another change in lifestyle, he called in to see Claudio Alcorso at Moorilla and was immediately impressed with his enthusiasm and optimism for the wine industry. Having a suitable site near Bicheno, he and his wife Susan decided on a vineyard. Encouraged and assisted by both Alcorso and Graham Wiltshire, he did a lot of research on varieties, plant spacing and trellising, but no-one could predict what would succeed on the site. Accordingly they planted six varieties- cabernet sauvignon, pinot noir, chardonnay, riesling, muller thurgau and sauvignon blanc, calling the vineyard Freycinet. Sauvignon blanc was quickly discarded, and he blended muller thurgau with riesling for some years before replacing the muller thurgau vines with the higher value pinot noir. All the planting material came from the Agriculture Department's Rowella

⁷ Pirie, "The '78 Vintage- Tasmania." Wine and Spirit Buying Guide, July, 1978, p.13

⁸ *Oral History Recording No.9* Geoff Bull, 2010

vineyard. The first wine was made in 1984 by Julian Alcorso at Moorilla, but the wine was made in the newly built Freycinet winery from 1985 on.⁹

John Austwick was a Hobart dentist who acquired a love of wine at Jimmy Watson's wine bar in Melbourne and developed it while living in London. In 1979¹⁰, he planted about a quarter of a hectare at Craigie Knowe, near Swansea, to cabernet sauvignon from Bream Creek, later adding cabernet franc, merlot, petit verdot, chardonnay and pinot noir from Uplands nursery at Cambridge. The first vintage was made with the assistance of Julian Alcorso in 1984, and the cabernet was much admired by Robin Bradley, author of *Australian Wine Vintages* (better known as the *Gold Book*) who encouraged Austwick to continue.¹¹ The wine was made at the vineyard from 1986 onward.¹²

Claudio Alcorso's son Julian had returned to Tasmania in 1979 after some years in Sydney. He worked as a business consultant for the Tasmanian Development Authority, but in 1980 a decision was made to enlarge the winery at Moorilla and to put the whole operation on a more businesslike basis, with Julian taking over the winemaking. They retained Tony Jordan and Brian Croser of Oenotech to design the enlarged winery, to design a winemaking training program for Julian and to act as ongoing consultants as the tonnages increased. Julian's winemaking education over the next five years was to include formal courses at Wagga, two vintages in Burgundy and hands on training with Jordan and Croser in various wineries around Australia.¹³

In April, 1980, legendary Australian winemaker Max Schubert visited the state as guest of honour at a tasting of the top Penfolds red wines organized by the Launceston Wine and Food Society at the Gorge Restaurant. He predicted great things for Tasmania, and

⁹ Bull used Gary Baldwin as winemaking consultant in the early years.

¹⁰ The first vineyard on the East coast was actually planted by Michael Curtis, Wiltshire's partner at Legana, at Bicheno, shortly before his death in 1975. The vineyard did not survive.

¹¹ Robin Bradley later gave the Craigie Knowe Cabernet Sauvignon a rare five star rating.

¹² *Oral History Recording No.42* John Austwick, 2011

¹³ Julian Alcorso, *Oral History Recording No. 41* (Hobart: 2010).

particularly praised the Heemskerk cabernet sauvignon¹⁴ which had “qualities which have largely eluded interstate winemakers”¹⁵

Tasmania had other media promoters, amongst them mainland wine writer James Halliday who, as early as 1978, had written “it is Tasmania which best illustrates my belief that the new premium areas will be cool climate ones”, describing the 1976 Heemskerk cabernet as “cabernet as one tastes it in Bordeaux much more than in Australia”.¹⁶ He was to be the most consistent champion of Tasmanian wine for the next 30 years.

Halliday had been a member of the Victorian wine options team which travelled to Tasmania in June, 1980 for the first interstate competition, organized by Aberfeldy Cellars. The competition was the brainchild of Graeme Lynch of Aberfeldy Cellars and Melbourne wine merchant Ross Duke, and Lynch recalls some of the Tasmanian tasters as himself, Peter Dodson, John Wilson, Ben Vaughan, Dr Michael Sweet, Dr Ian Beltz and John Skinner. Amongst the Victorian team were some significant figures in Australian wine- Ross Duke, James Halliday, Brett Crittenden, Philip Murphy, Garry Davidson, Gary Steel and Geoff Meakin.¹⁷ The wines were presented by Andrew Pirie of Pipers Brook. While this and subsequent competitions were not directly connected with Tasmanian wine, they were of enormous value to the industry in introducing mainland wine identities to the best of the Tasmanian product at associated tastings and dinners. The Tasmanian team repeated their success on a return trip to Victoria the following year, thrashing the highly fancied Victorians by 29 points.

In 1981, the status of wine in Tasmania was further strengthened when four young Tasmanians won the national final of the Wine and Spirit Buyers Guide Wine Options Contest in Adelaide. Phil Laing, Geoff Joyce, Brendan Hextal and Phil O’Brien showed that Tasmanian palates were at least as sharp as their mainland counterparts.

¹⁴ Still at this stage from the Legana vineyard

¹⁵ *The Tasmanian Mail*, (Launceston). 30 April, 1980, p.8

¹⁶ *The Australian Woman's Weekly*, (Sydney). 1978

¹⁷ Graeme Lynch, Personal communication, 16 June, 2011

The marketing of Tasmanian wine was given another significant boost with the creation of the Aberfeldy Club in August of 1980. Under the leadership of Graeme Lynch, the Aberfeldy Hotel in Davey Street, Hobart had been developed into a combination discount liquor outlet and fine wine merchant. Lynch was a knowledgeable and enthusiastic wine man who was to become one of the great promoters of the Tasmanian industry within the state. The Aberfeldy Club, which would have 10,000 members at its peak, became the most significant agent for wine education in Tasmania, producing 10 newsletters per year and conducting regular wine tastings and promotional events around the state. Despite the limited supply of Tasmanian wine, there was a strong and consistent commitment to support the local industry, and the Tasmanian Wine Industry reviews published in 1981¹⁸ and 1982¹⁹ are valuable historical snapshots of the industry at that time.

Another group which was to have a significant influence on viticulture in the north of the state, was the Launceston Wine Appreciation Society. Recognising that a good palate was a winemaker's basic tool of trade, a number of northern wine identities got together to form a tasting group which met (and still meets) on the last Tuesday of the month in Launceston. The idea was to have 12 members, based on the fact that there are 12 tasting portions in a bottle, and they were all to be involved in the wine trade. The initial group which met at the Gorge Restaurant included Graham Wiltshire, Richard Winspear, Gavin Scott, David Pirie, Bill Mitchell, Barry Larter, John Thorp, Pat Sullivan, Michael Searle and John Taylor²⁰. Local chef and restaurateur John Roddick has always been closely connected to the group, providing matching food for the wines.

The 1980 vintage saw the first wines carrying the gold Tasmanian Certificate of Origin seal; the 1980 Pipers Brook Riesling, the 1980 Moorilla Riesling, the 1980 Heemskerk cabernet sauvignon and a 1980 Heemskerk varietal white blend. This involved the vineyards in registering their crops with the Department of Agriculture to assess quantity, and submitting them to an independent tasting panel to assess quality.

¹⁸ *Aberfeldy Club Newsletter*, (Hobart: Aberfeldy Cellars). July, 1981

¹⁹ *The Tasmanian Wine Industry- 1982*, (Hobart: Aberfeldy Cellars, 1982).

²⁰ *Oral History Recording No. 18*, Gavin Scott, 2010

The promising first vintages at the three major vineyards seems to have instilled some confidence in the future of the industry and 1980 saw several new small vineyards planted around the state.

Peter and Brenda Bosworth were looking for land in the Coal River Valley and found a good frost free site with free draining dolerite soils over a limestone base- an old apricot farm which Peter took as a good sign- where apricots ripen, so should grapes.

The property was called Morningside, and in 1980 they planted .4ha. to cabernet sauvignon, pinot noir and riesling, with cuttings mainly from the Department of Agriculture trial vineyards. Peter Bosworth remembers the assistance of Don Martin, Bob Menary and particularly George Park- the vineyard was largely modeled on his Stoney vineyard. The first vintage was in 1984 and the wine has always been made Peter on the property.²¹

Peter Mackay, the Legislative Councillor who was instrumental in stopping the 50% blending provisions in the 1976 Licensing Act, now planted his own vineyard at his Pembroke property, calling it Uplands Estate. Damon Hawker was a partner in the venture, which was intended to be principally a commercial nursery providing certified rootstock to the growing industry. The Department of Agriculture provided cuttings of four clones of pinot noir in 1981 and the first sale was made to Peter Bosworth at Morningside in 1982.

Dallas and Julie Targett began work on their Bellingham Vineyard at Pipers Brook in 1980, as did Lloyd Matthews at Cross Rivulet near Cambridge.

In the north, wine-loving pharmacist Gavin Scott, who had been involved with La Provence, planted one hectare of what would become the four hectare Glengarry vineyard to pinot noir and cabernet sauvignon, with cuttings sourced through the Department of Agriculture. Gavin had picked up some knowledge of winemaking working with Graham Wiltshire at Legana, was undertaking a winemaking course at Wagga, and had made

²¹ Ibid. 46, Peter and Brenda Bosworth, 2011

small batches for Bill Mitchell at Tamarway. He adapted an old farm shed on the property to a winery. It was quickly clear that cabernet was not suited to the site and the future lay with pinot noir.²²

In early 1980, an American couple on a visit to the state made a spontaneous decision to buy 11 hectares at Deviot on the West Tamar. Mark and Marion Semmens had been impressed with the Tasmanian wines they had tasted and believed that the picturesque site on the banks of the Tamar River would be ideal both for viticulture and for tourism.

They called the vineyard Tamar Valley Vineyards and initially planted two hectares of cabernet sauvignon, pinot noir, chardonnay and muller Thurgau, gradually building to five hectares. Mark Semmens is a colourful character and an enthusiastic marketer, and the vineyard's plans included cellar door, restaurant and accommodation.²³ Marion's Vineyard, as it later became known, has the distinction of opening the first cellar door in the north of the state.

In January, 1981, the Aberfeldy Club staged the first major public tasting of Tasmanian wines. The public paid \$15 to taste wines presented by Andrew Pirie, Graham Wiltshire, Claudio and Julian Alcorso, and other growers. The initial 150 tickets were quickly sold out and a capacity crowd of 170 people attended the tasting at Wrest Point on January 29, opened by the Minister for Primary Industry, Dr Julian Amos.

In a courageous exercise, Pirie completed the tasting with a comparison between the four Tasmanian red wines and a wine from a Grand Cru Margaux vineyard, the 1978 Chateau Lanscombes. The Tasmanian reds had a long way to go to achieve the elegance and style of the Lanscombes, but clearly showed the potential to do so, in contrast with mainland regions.

Pirie was that year appointed a full judge at the Royal Sydney Show, a considerable distinction in wine circles, and his standing in the industry was demonstrated by an editorial in the Sydney Morning Herald describing his Tasmanian quest. Mainland media

²² Ibid.18, Gavin Scott, 2010

²³ *The Northern Scene*, (Launceston). 25 November, 1981, p.12

interest was maintained by Melbourne wine writer David Dunstan, who published a number of articles on Tasmania in the Melbourne Age in 1981 and in 1982 conducted an extended interview with Andrew Pirie over two issues of the Australian Wine Newsletter.²⁴ Pirie's growing status and profile could only enhance the credibility of Tasmanian viticulture.

In 1981, the first Tasmanian wine was made out of the state. Gerald Ellis had bought the Meadowbank property in the Derwent Valley from Richard Winspear in 1977. While this was principally a grazing property, he maintained and gradually expanded the small vineyard planted by Winspear in 1970 and enlarged in 1975. The first quantity sufficient for winemaking was in 1980, with the wines made by Julian Alcorso. In 1981, the well known Victorian vigneron Ian Hickinbotham expressed interest in buying fruit from the vineyard. In 1981, 11 tonnes of fruit was sent to Hickinbotham's Mount Anakie Vineyard in Victoria packed in cardboard boxes to minimize crushing, where the wines were made by Ian's son Stephen Hickinbotham, and marketed as Meadowbank Tasmanian wine. Stephen Hickinbotham was at that time the only Australian graduate from the national French winemaking school and very interested in using French winemaking techniques to make wines, particularly cabernets, from the cooler regions of Australia. He visited Hobart in November, 1991 for an Aberfeldy tasting of his first Tasmanian wine, the 1981 Meadowbank riesling. This interstate arrangement continued until Stephen Hickinbotham died tragically in an aircraft accident in 1986.

At this time, the focus in Tasmania was still very much on cabernet sauvignon and that variety was central to most new vineyard ventures. Pinot noir was still seen as a rather exotic variety which would be hard to market, and show results were encouraging for cabernet growers. At the 1981 Royal Hobart Show, there were 71 1981 vintage cabernets entered from all around Australia, and Tasmania won two of the six gold medal awarded- for the 1981 Pipers Brook and the 1981 Heemskerk. This was reinforced by wine writers like James Halliday who wrote in October, 1982

²⁴ David Dunstan, "Interview: Andrew Pirie," *Australian Wine Newsletter*, no. 6, August, 1982 (1982), No.7 September, 1982

*it has been said that cabernet is yet to prove itself in Tasmania; I simply cannot agree. I first tasted the '81 Pipers Brook (cabernet) against a range of '79 Bordeaux reds; it lost nothing in terms of structure and depth.*²⁵

In December, 1981, John Thorp of the Department of Agriculture resigned to take up a teaching position at Orange in NSW. The Vineyards Association of Tasmania acknowledged his contribution to viticulture and wine making in Tasmania and said that he would be a great loss to the wine industry. Thorp, working with Clive Matthews until his death in 1973, and later by himself, was the driving force behind the establishment of nurseries to provide virus free planting material for the industry and the move towards appellation, and also made significant contributions to the Launceston Wine Appreciation Society and the Royal Hobart Wine Show.

The VAT suggested to the Department that, rather than appoint another officer, they should consider the appointment of a “person or organization as consultants to the State in viticulture and winemaking” in order to “obtain the very best professional advice”.²⁶

They felt that this appointment may be supported by the University and by major producers and may also be of interest to the Victorian Department of Agriculture who were seeking such advice for the expanding Yarra Valley industry. This suggestion was not taken up by the Department, and the principle role in viticulture was taken over by Fred Peacock, who was himself to make an enormous contribution to the industry as viticulturist and consultant over the next 40 years.

In early 1982, David Pirie, who, with his wife Elizabeth, had done much of the hard work setting up the vineyard, decided to sell his shares in Pipers Brook to concentrate on an orchid growing venture and offered investment units in the vineyard for \$4,250 each. At that time the vineyard had almost 10 hectares bearing with cabernet sauvignon, riesling, chardonnay, gewurtztraminer and pinot noir, with plans to expand the pinot noir

²⁵ *National Times*. 3 to 9 October, 1982,

²⁶ *Minutes of the Meetings of the Vineyards Association of Tasmania*. 2 December, 1981, p.3

plantings. Asked his personal ambition, Andrew Pirie replied “to make Pipers Brook Vineyard the Chateau Petrus of the Southern Hemisphere”.²⁷

Pirie was to be one of the presenters at a special Wine Press Club luncheon in Melbourne on June 30, 1982, organized by Tasmanian tourism, food producers and wineries. Both Pirie and Graham Wiltshire suffered another Tasmanian limitation, a fogged-in airport, and missed the luncheon, with Aberfeldy Cellars chief Graeme Lynch stepping in as guest speaker. With more than 100 wine journalists and wine industry personnel attending, this was probably the most important interstate promotion of Tasmanian wine to this date, and generated a lot of positive press. The wines presented, matched with Tasmanian foods, were the 1981 Heemskerk chardonnay, 1981 Pipers Brook cabernet, 1981 Meadowbank cabernet and the 1981 Moorilla pinot noir.

At Heemskerk, Graham Wiltshire was becoming increasingly convinced that the future of the vineyard lay with pinot noir, both for table and sparkling wine. He was able to arrange to work six weeks during the 1982 vintage at Clos de Vougeot in Burgundy, and wrote about the experience in the Aberfeldy Newsletter. He posed a question- comparing Australian pinots to Burgundy is like comparing Kraft cheddar with brie, yet Australian winemaking technology is far superior to the French. Why is it so? He concludes that the French superiority came from “selection by chance and perseverance over the centuries of relatively small areas that provide high quality grapes”.²⁸ In other words, great wine is made in the vineyard. Despite what he saw as “incredibly little fuss or attention” during winemaking, he writes that “the flavours of the grape juice and the bouquet of the must and young wines have to be experienced to be believed”.

In October, 1982, Aberfeldy Cellars produced a six page newsletter entitled *The Tasmanian Wine Industry- 1982*. This was widely distributed and provides a very useful summary of the industry at this stage of its development with a brief history, a description of all existing vineyards, the Tasmanian Wine Certification Scheme and an editorial by

²⁷ *Aberfeldy Club Newsletter.*, June, 1982, p.2

²⁸ *Ibid.* January, 1983, p.5

Graeme Lynch with the headline “Quality first- not quantity”.²⁹ In it, Lynch points out that the local industry cannot rely on curiosity value for much longer and will have to compete with the many emerging boutique vineyards, both from established wine regions and from new areas like the Yarra Valley and Margaret River.

Curiosity value had certainly ensured that demand exceeded supply for Tasmanian wine at this stage, regardless of sometimes uneven quality, as viticulturists and winemakers honed their skills, learning from experience, and often from their mistakes.. Inevitably, with new vineyards planted in new areas, there were constant unforeseen problems- excess vigour from the rich volcanic soils at Pipers Brook- wind damage both at Pipers Brook and Bream Creek, while the latter vineyard also battled with powdery mildew. By and large yields were low as varieties and vineyard management were refined.

On the mainland the early 80s saw the continuing growth of “boutique” vineyards, and has been described as “the era of the young, upwardly mobile winemaker”³⁰ as Brian McGuigan, Wolf Blass, Tim Knappstein, Brian Croser, Geoff Merrill, Jeffrey Grosset and many more moved from employment in the large corporations into their own winemaking ventures. At the other end of the market, major corporations, attracted by the rapid market growth of table wine, continued to increase their wine holdings, with four or five companies controlling the almost all the bulk wine production. Coles (Liquorland), Myer (San Remo), Woolworths and Safeway were beginning to dominate the retail sector of the industry. At this time, the varieties sultana and muscat gordo blanco still accounted for more than 40% of Australia’s white wine (predominantly in wine casks), but the growth in demand was for the premium varieties, particularly chardonnay. During the first half of the 1980s Australia’s vineyard area actually fell by 20% as old varieties were grubbed out to reflect the changing public taste. By 1984 Tasmania could boast 71 hectares of the 57,000 hectares planted in Australia.

²⁹ *The Tasmanian Wine Industry- 1982.*

³⁰ Beeston, *Concise History of Australian Wine*.p.257

CHAPTER EIGHT

TASMANIA BEGINS TO SPARKLE

1983 was a difficult vintage with drought conditions through the summer causing stress to young vines and rain at harvest time bringing botrytis infection in many areas. Bird damage continued to be a significant problem, but overall fruit quality was good with optimism about the coming wines.

It was also the year of floating the Australian dollar and introducing random breath testing at an 0.05 limit in NSW, Victoria and Tasmania, both of which measures were to have long term implications for the Australian wine industry.

The Australian consumer's seemingly unquenchable thirst for table wine continued however and the year was to see the foundation of a number of significant Tasmanian vineyards.

Richard Richardson was the son of a chef and grew up in a family enthusiastic about food and wine. At Sydney University he met a fellow graduate student Andrew Pirie and was immediately impressed with Andrew's vision for viticulture in Tasmania. After graduating with a PhD as an agricultural biochemist, he visited Tasmania in 1974, then spent a period overseas, although always keeping in touch with Andrew Pirie, eventually asking him to look out for a suitable block for a vineyard. In 1982, he came down to look at a block which Andrew Pirie had suggested and bought it immediately. Moving down to Tasmania with his wife Dallas and parents Peter and Katherine, they set about establishing the Delamere vineyard at Pipers Brook. They sought advice from the few experienced growers in Tasmania and that advice was, almost unanimously, plant pinot noir and chardonnay. Later that year Richard Richardson pruned the La Provence vineyard, by that time owned by Stuart Bryce, and took cuttings of pinot noir and chardonnay which were planted in a nursery block. The rootlings were planted in the

vineyard in 1983, together with certified material from the Department of Agriculture. They followed the French close planting pattern with 1.5 metres between vines, even closer than Pipers Brook. Over the next three years the vineyard was expanded to three hectares. The wines were made at Pipers Brook in 1986 and 1987 but made by Richard Richardson at the Delamere winery from 1988 onward.¹

Laurie Wing was a Launceston pharmacist with a love of wine stimulated by travel in Europe. In 1980 he took over the lease of the Department of Agriculture's half hectare trial block at Rowella while he looked for the right site for a larger vineyard. He found a run down dairy farm on the West Tamar at Rosevears and bought it on the advice of Andrew Pirie. Laurie and Adele Wing called the vineyard St Matthias, and planting began in 1983. Wing recalls now that he planted far too many varieties, which included cabernet, pinot, merlot, chardonnay and riesling. The initial planting was four hectares expanding to seven hectares by 1986. First vintage was 1986 and in December of that year the St Matthias cellar door was opened with some fanfare, the second cellar door opened in the north of the state.²

Further down the Tamar, Geoff and Cheryl Hewitt were planting their Cliff House Vineyard. Geoff was from a farming family, but had spent some years overseas running a yacht charter business, before returning to Tasmania. Encouraged by the Department of Agriculture's Fred Peacock, who assessed the Cliff House site, he decided to join the budding Tasmanian wine industry, planting four hectares of cabernet sauvignon, pinot noir, chardonnay and riesling at Kayena. The first vintage released under the Cliff House label was in 1988.

A little further down the road at Rowella, Family Court judge Justice Edward Butler with his son Nicholas, had bought an old orchard property in 1982 and began the Holm Oak Vineyard in 1983, planting half a hectare to cabernet sauvignon and pinot noir from Gavin Scott's Glengarry Vineyard. Over subsequent years the vineyard was enlarged to five hectares, comprising, 2.5 hectares of cabernet sauvignon, 2 hectares of pinot noir and

¹ Richard Richardson, *Oral History Recording No. 37* (Launceston: 2010).

² Laurie Wing, *Oral History Recording No. 43* (East Coast: 2010).

a half hectare of the Bordeaux varieties cabernet franc, merlot and petit verdot. While Edward Butler established the vineyard, Nick went off to study viticulture at Wagga, then worked a vintage at Yalumba before returning to Tasmania to work with Andrew Pirie at Pipers Brook. The first full vintage at Holm Oak was in 1988, with the two wines, cabernet sauvignon and pinot noir, released in 1990.³

At Glengarry, also on the West Tamar, Doug and Cathy Bowen planted their three hectare Notley Gorge Vineyard in that year, and, in the south of the state, Barbara and Ken Jones planted half a hectare of cabernet sauvignon and riesling at their Geebin Vineyard at Birch's Bay.

Interest was continuing to grow amongst prospective viticulturists and in 1983 the Department of Agriculture had orders for more than 30,000 cuttings, only half of which they were able to supply.⁴

The Vineyards Association of Tasmania, now with more than 30 members, continued to press for a full appellation of origin for Tasmanian wines. Although the Government's Wine Certification Scheme had been extended to cover vintage 1983, VAT was now suggesting a two tier scheme with a VAT "wine exceptionnelle" sticker for wines of particularly high quality. The organization was keen to see Tasmania join the OIV or International Organisation of Vine and Wine, based in Paris. Claudio Alcorso had originally suggested the move back in 1981, seeing the desirability of adopting internationally recognized standards of appellation and quality in Tasmania. The matter had since been discussed with the State Ministers concerned, the Director of Agriculture, and the Commonwealth Government, and Alcorso himself had met with the OIV in Paris in June of 1982, reporting that he saw no impediment to Tasmanian membership given the support of State and Federal Governments.⁵ By June of 1983, the proposed regulations for membership of OIV were before Cabinet for approval. At the Annual General meeting in June, Brian Richardson of the Department of Agriculture told the

³ Nick Butler, *Oral History Recording No. 27* (Launceston: 2010).butler

⁴ *Minutes of the Meetings of the Vineyards Association of Tasmania*. 28 August, 1983 p. 6

⁵ *Ibid.* 15 August, 1982 p.2

meeting that the proposed legislation was currently before the State Committee for Deregulation, and Andrew Pirie and Graeme Lynch were appointed as a sub-committee to ensure the passage of the legislation.⁶ Despite their efforts Cabinet did not approve the legislation at that time but the push towards full appellation continued.

With growers' preference trending towards pinot noir, Tasmanian cabernet was given a boost with the announcement of the results of the Jimmy Watson Trophy in August. Despite industry reservations about this Melbourne Show Trophy, which judged one year old (often unfinished) red wines, the "Jimmy Watson" remained the Melbourne Cup of show awards, attracting more public and media attention than any other Australian wine trophy. At the 1983 Melbourne show, the 1982 Heemskerk won one of three gold medals, equal pointed with two mainland wines, and narrowly conceded the Jimmy Watson Trophy to a Cape Mentelle cabernet sauvignon in a taste-off.

Pinot noir had its triumphs as well, with James Halliday saying this of the 1981 Pipers Brook pinot:

*it is an amazing wine, which I would invariably and unhesitatingly pick as a top class French burgundy.....if served masked. It's soft, slightly sappy fruit flavour is the very essence of Burgundy*⁷

There had been considerable discussion in VAT meetings about the value of the Royal Hobart Show for Tasmanian vigneron and the need for a dedicated Tasmanian show. At the August meeting, Andrew Pirie advised that the world's leading viticultural authority, Professor Maynard Amerine of California, would be visiting Australia in October and had expressed interest in coming to Tasmania. The meeting resolved to invite Professor Amerine to conduct the inaugural VAT wine show and to hold a workshop for growers.⁸

The show was held at the Department of Agriculture's Mount Pleasant offices on October 21, 1983. No medals were awarded but the 35 wines entered were assessed for

⁶ Ibid. 19 June, 1983

⁷ Halliday, James, *The Weekend Australian*, (Sydney). 4-5 August, 1984 p.18

⁸ *Minutes of the Meetings of the Vineyards Association of Tasmania*. 28 August, 1983, p.2

certification (28 were accepted)⁹, with certain wines classified excellent or outstanding. Professor Amerine was impressed with the chardonnays and the pinot noirs, but found the cabernets too herbaceous¹⁰ and the rieslings sound but undistinguished.¹¹

In 1983, VAT introduced a system of collecting annual returns from members, so, from the 1984 vintage, we have an annual record of hectares under vine and yields. As of June 1984, there were 23 member vineyards, that produced 248 tonnes from 71 hectares of bearing vineyard, a yield per hectare of 3.5 tonnes.¹² 150 tonnes of that total came from the Heemskerk and Pipers Brook vineyards

1984 also saw the entry of another significant figure into the Tasmanian wine industry, when RAAF Squadron Leader Stuart Bryce took over La Provence vineyard, which he had purchased from Max Reynolds in 1980. After 20 years flying, Bryce was planning retirement from the Air Force and looking for a complete change of lifestyle growing wine grapes in Tasmania. In 1976, he had enrolled in a Wine Science degree as an external student at Riverina CAE (later Charles Sturt University).¹³ He first visited the state looking for vineyard land in 1977 and, working with John Thorp at the Department of Agriculture, put in a one acre trial block at Cyril Fulbrook's *Fairbanks* property at Nabowla in the north east, and another acre block at Lilydale on the *Melbanks* property above the cemetery. With an absentee landlord, (Bryce was then resident in Sydney) both vineyards succumbed to the ravages of the local wildlife. The search continued and in July 1979 Bryce heard that Max Reynolds wanted to sell Jean Miguet's original La Provence vineyard at Lalla. A cash offer of \$25,000 was successful and Bryce was the owner of a very run down vineyard- the vines were so overgrown that it was impossible to walk between the rows. In Bryce's absence, Graham Wiltshire took over the management and rehabilitation of the vineyard. In January, 1985 Bryce bought the

⁹ *Vineyards Association of Tasmania Inaugural Wine Show Official Results*, (Launceston: 1983).

¹⁰ *Aberfeldy Club Newsletter*. November, 1983

¹¹ *The Examiner*. 22 October, 1983

¹² The full table is printed in graph form in the Conclusion

¹³ The degree took Bryce 11½ years to complete.

adjoining property and the following year began to enlarge the vineyard, with additional pinot noir, chardonnay and riesling.¹⁴

Another significant new vineyard to start in 1984 was Eric and Jette Phillips' Elsewhere Vineyard at Glaziers Bay in the Huon Valley. The Phillips had bought the property in 1976 to establish a commercial flower farm. In the meantime, Eric Phillips worked for Max Reynolds at Chateau Lorraine and in 1977 planted 100 pinot noir rootlings from Chateau Lorraine (and originally from La Provence) in a trial plot in their garden. They started making small quantities of wine in 1981, then entered their 1983 pinot noir in the inaugural VAT wine show in Launceston. Encouraged by having that wine accepted for Tasmanian Certification, and financed by the success of their cut flower business, they began a planting program which eventually reached 11 hectares of pinot noir, riesling and chardonnay.¹⁵

At Heemskerk vineyard in the north, the first few crops had been processed by Graham Wiltshire at his Legana winery, but as yields increased this was clearly not sustainable and in 1984 a winery was built at the Heemskerk vineyard. This beautiful building was designed by Hobart architect Charles Voss and was inspired by the literal meaning of "Heemskerk"- "old church" in Dutch. All structural timber and cladding was Tasmanian celery top pine and today the building has been redeveloped as the Jansz Wine Room. The new winery was ready for the 1984 vintage and at the same time Wiltshire was discussing with Directors the possibility of trialling sparkling wines, arguing that the pinot noir and chardonnay being produced were ideal for that purpose, although in cooler years not always ripe enough for table wine. He was aware that French Champagne house Moet and Chandon had made a favourable assessment of northern Tasmania as their sparkling wine base in Australia, but had eventually opted for the Yarra Valley, primarily because of its proximity to a large population base in Melbourne. Certainly cabernet sauvignon was proving difficult to ripen and gewurtztraminer was also lacking both in yield and quality. The Chairman of the controlling company, Fesq, Haselgrove and

¹⁴ Stuart Bryce, *Oral History Recording No. 2* (Launceston: 2010).

¹⁵ Eric Phillips, *Oral History Recording No. 32* (Hobart: 2010).

Wiltshire, Bill Fesq, was the Australian agent for prestigious French Champagne house Roederer and approached the French company which at that time was looking for “New World” investments. While those negotiations continued, it was decided to progressively remove all varieties except pinot noir and chardonnay (about half of the original 25 hectares planted) and replace it with pinot noir and pinot meunier. The prospective Roederer connection was enthusiastically supported by both the Chairman of the Tasmanian Development Authority and its Manager Phillip Chandler, both of whom visited Roederer at their headquarters in Rheims. In March, 1985, the Premier Robin Gray announced that Louis Roederer had agreed to a joint venture with Heemskerk for the development of a 25 hectare vineyard for the production of premium sparkling wine. The Roederer alliance was a coup for Heemskerk. Roederer was a highly respected family company and one of the top French champagne houses; the Roederer Cristal was considered one of the world’s best Champagnes. In the following year, Roederer took a 32% holding in Fesq, Haselgrove and Wiltshire, with Fesq and Co holding 32% and a Tasmanian group Tasvin Pty. Ltd., led by Graham Wiltshire, also holding 32%. The remaining shares were held by members of the Haselgrove family.¹⁶ The deal also included technical winemaking support from Roederer.¹⁷

There was also European interest from an eighth generation Swiss vigneron, Bernard Rochaix, who, frustrated by the restrictions on viticulture in his homeland, had been looking for a cool climate “new world” vineyard site. In September of 1984, he and his wife Brigitte, purchased the Idle Wilde property at Pipers River. They took on a partner, Alf Edgecombe, an experienced viticulturist with a family vineyard in the Swan Valley of Western Australia, and set about establishing the Rochecombe Vineyard. The plan was to spend six months of the year in Tasmania and six months looking after their Les Perrieres vineyard in Switzerland. Planting began in 1985 and varieties included pinot noir, cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc, chardonnay, riesling, chenin blanc and sauvignon blanc. The vineyard was progressively expanded to 25 hectares over the next seven years. The Rochaix also imported a number of different varieties and clones from Switzerland

¹⁶ Colin Haselgrove had died in 1982.

¹⁷ Graham Wiltshire, *Oral History Recording No. 9* (Launceston: 2010).

and France which were cultivated at the Government Quarantine Station at Kingston, with the first vines released to Rochedcombe in 1991.

A third newcomer with European connections was also to show interest in Tasmania. In May, 1985, Dominique Portet, managing director and winemaker at Taltarni Wines in Victoria, announced that Taltarni would be setting up a vineyard and winery in northern Tasmania to grow chardonnay and pinot noir for sparkling wine. Portet was a sixth generation French winemaker, born and trained in France, with a personal quest to produce a hallmark Australian sparkling wine in the French tradition. He was to buy land at Lebrina in the north east the following year.

Three smaller vineyards were established in the state during 1984. Heron's Rise is a tiny half hectare vineyard at Kettering established by Gerry and Sue White, who planted pinot noir, riesling and muller thurgau. With encouragement from Graham Wiltshire, Robin Holyman, of Holyman's shipping fame, planted the Mews vineyard, .6 of a hectare of pinot noir and chardonnay at their historic Mount Pleasant property in Launceston. At Pipers Brook, Leigh and Janet Gawith began to develop St Patrick's vineyard, which included a commercial vine nursery. First planting was a hectare of Bordeaux varieties, cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc, merlot and petit verdot, and a hectare of pinot noir, using no less than 10 separate clones. St Patrick's was the first vineyard to contract to supply sparkling base material to a mainland company, planting 3.5 hectares to pinot noir and chardonnay for Samuel Smith & Sons (Yalumba). Their own wines were released as Wattle Creek, with a bottle of Pipers Brook visible in the label illustration, a tribute to the help and encouragement they received from their neighbor, Andrew Pirie. Leigh Gawith was active in VAT and an energetic campaigner for a Tasmanian vine improvement scheme, arguing that it was vital to find the right clones of pinot noir and chardonnay, and that these may not be the same as those which succeed in France.

It is hard to believe that to this date, almost 30 years after Miguet planted the first vines, Tasmania still did not have a resident professionally trained and qualified winemaker.¹⁸ In 1984, Don Buchanan, a highly regarded mainland winemaker with two Jimmy Watson Trophies in his CV, relocated to Tasmania, to establish a vineyard and run a consultancy service. He was Roseworthy trained and indentured to Lindemans for a decade, working at Karadoc in Mildura, Leo Buring in the Clare Valley, Coonawarra and many more Lindemans owned wineries. He also worked at Kaiser Stuhl and Krondorf, where his wines won a Jimmy Watson Trophy and a Qantas Trophy. While teaching winemaking back at Roseworthy he met Dr Richard Smart who helped him in a search for a suitable vineyard site to make cool climate Alsatian style wines. Tasmania was one of the suggested regions. Buchanan took a two week break in Tasmania and came home to announce to his Tasmanian-born wife that he had bought a block of land on the West Tamar. They moved to the state in January, 1984, bringing with them certified planting stock from CSIRO Mildura, which was propagated in a Hobart nursery while they cleared the West Tamar block and built a mud brick winery. He launched Frasca Consultancy Service and soon acquired clients for contract winemaking. Six hectares of the Loira vineyard was planted in 1985, with various clones of pinot noir and riesling, chardonnay, sauvignon blanc and frontignac. The first Buchanan Wines were made in 1988 and 1989, with some of the pinot noir bottled under Stelvin closure screw cap, the first use of the technology in Tasmania. They were also the first to use the 187ml. wine bottles for airlines, after winning a contract to supply Ansett Airlines in 1989.¹⁹

In the 1984 Federal budget, the long anticipated sales tax on wine was introduced. The breweries had lobbied vigorously for equity in alcohol taxation, and the 1984 budget brought in a 10% tax on wine. In a market driven by discount retailers this increase was largely absorbed by the producers, making their profitability even more marginal, and assisting the predatory takeovers and acquisitions by companies like Adelaide Steamship, Rothmans, Hardy's and Mildara Blass. The General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs

¹⁸ John Rozentals, a journalist with the Hobart Mercury was a qualified winemaker but not involved with the Tasmanian wine industry.

¹⁹ Don Buchanan, *Oral History Recording No. 24* (Bali: 2010).

(GATT) meant that the tax on imported wines had to be halved to match the Australian wine tax, making local wineries even less competitive. A Federal Government enquiry found that, by the mid 80s, almost half Australia's wineries were operating at a loss. This startling finding did not however prevent the Federal Government doubling the tax to 20% in 1986.²⁰ A further blow to wine sales was dealt with the introduction of the Fringe Benefits tax in 1985, with most restaurants reporting a dramatic drop in their "business lunch" trade.

The industry was still on a steep learning curve in Tasmania and VAT was active in importing mainland expertise to run workshops for the relatively inexperienced local growers. Visiting experts included Bryce Rankine and Peter Dry from the Australian Wine Research Institute in 1985, Patrick Iland and Andrew Ewart from Roseworthy College in the following year, and Garry Baldwin and Terry Lee from the Australian Wine Research Institute in 1987.

The move towards appellation proceeded slowly and to advance the matter, the Chairman, Claudio Alcorso, invited the Managing Director of the Tasmanian Development Authority, Phillip Chandler, the Commissioner for Licensing, Renouf Middleton, Aberfeldy Cellars Managing Director Graeme Lynch and the Department of Agriculture's Director of Plant Services, Ernie Martin, to join the executive committee at their meeting on July 23. There was agreement in principle that the Association pursue amendments to the Licensing Act to establish a "Tasmanian Government Appellation of Origin". This would apply only to grape wines produced in Tasmania entirely from grapes grown in Tasmania. Growers would be required to keep records, supply information and be subject to inspection. The appellation would only be a guarantee of origin, not of quality.²¹

At the same meeting it was resolved to appoint a part time Executive Officer for the Association, and at the following meeting on September 12, Mr Don Knight was appointed as the first VAT Executive Officer. At that meeting, the first draft proposal for

²⁰ Faith, *Australia's Liquid Gold*. P.151

²¹ *Minutes of the Meetings of the Vineyards Association of Tasmania*. 23 July, 1984 p.4

the Tasmanian Government Appellation of Origin was received from the Commissioner for Licensing and was approved in principle. The meeting also resolved to ask the Government to protest on behalf of the industry on the imposition of a 10% sales tax on wine, arguing that if a tax was necessary it should be based on quantity, not value, a debate which continues some 25 years later.

By the General Meeting held on December 2, the proposed appellation legislation had reached the third draft and was with the Association's solicitors. The next stage would be the final drafting, with the Minister for Licensing intending to submit the proposal to Cabinet early in 1985. The Association was also putting pressure on Government bodies to act on "spurious wines" claiming to be Tasmania, clearly referring to the activities of Max Reynolds both at Chateau Lorraine in the south and La Provence in the north. Evidence of this activity was to be forwarded to the Licensing Commission, Department of Agriculture, Consumer Affairs, the Tasmanian Development Authority and the Association's solicitors. By March of 1985, the Chairman was able to report that the matter was before the Licensing Board and that action would follow "within the next few months".²²

There had been a previous attempt to cancel Reynolds' licence in 1983, when his overdue licensing fees of \$2,685.25 were unpaid. Reynolds' explanation was one of corporate confusion, whereby his business had been taken over by another company which then employed him. That company then went in to receivership, with Reynolds working as a consultant to the receiver, then making an arrangement to lease back the freehold and plant of Chateau Lorraine Pty. Ltd.. The Board agreed not to cancel the licence if Reynolds paid \$1000 immediately and the remainder of the overdue fees in installments.²³

This time The Licensing Board of Tasmania advised Reynolds that there would be a review of the Special Wine Producer's Licence of the Lorraine Vineyards at Cygnet on

²² Ibid. 20 March, 1985 p. 3

²³ Licensing Board of Tasmania, *Review of Limited Off Licence as Required by Commissioner of Taxes-Chateau Lorraine* (Launceston: 1983). Pp.2-3

the 7th and 8th of May. Counsel for Reynolds requested that the date be put back to enable him to prepare his defence and the hearing was re-scheduled to May 28 and 29. In the end, after being advised of the evidence against him, Reynolds chose not to be represented and the case proceeded *ex parte*.

The most damning evidence was given by two employees of the vineyard who described how they:

*drove vehicles of the vineyard to Hobart and collected drums and other containers of liquor clearly marked by type and the names of mainland vineyards and suppliers and returned to the Lorraine Vineyards with that liquor.the liquor was then transferred from those containers straight into bottles which were labeled Chateau Lorraine and La Provence, without the blending of any Tasmanian wine whatsoever.*²⁴

The labels of the wines contained the words “100 per cent Tasmanian Grapes”. Evidence was given that in 1984 alone, Reynolds imported almost 7,000 litres of mainland wine, which he claimed was “supplied at barbeques held on his property”. Fred Peacock of the Department of Agriculture testified that the Lorraine Vineyard was poorly maintained and could not have produced the quantities of wine being sold.

It was an open and shut case- the Chairman of the Licensing Board said in his judgement:

*The Board is satisfied that the evidence conclusively shows a consistent and deliberate course of conduct, not only to breach the Act but to flagrantly carry on business contrary to not only the provisions but the whole spirit of the Licensing Act. The actions of the Licensee are also to be deplored upon the grounds of the effect which this course of conduct has upon the fledgling wine industry in Tasmania.*²⁵

The Board may well have added its own apology to the wine industry for having taken some six years to close such a blatantly offending licensee down. Reynolds was found to be “not a fit and proper person to hold a liquor licence in Tasmania” and his licence was cancelled.

²⁴ ———, *Liquor Licensing Reports 1984-85* (Hobart: Parliament of Tasmania, 1985). P.55

²⁵ *Ibid.* p.56

The cancellation of Reynolds' licence attracted wide media coverage in Tasmania and nationally. The Australian Financial Review quoted Aberfeldy Cellars chief Graeme Lynch: "It has been incredible how much damage has been done to the industry's reputation over the past six years by the practices of Max Reynolds at Chateau Lorraine. We have constantly received comments from consumers, many from interstate, as to their disappointment in the quality and style of the "Tasmanian wine" marketed under this label."²⁶

Nothing if not resilient, Reynolds soon re-opened his Cygnet retail outlet, selling non alcoholic fruit cordials.

The Reynolds hearing with its attendant publicity provided the final impetus to the Tasmanian Appellation of Origin scheme. The final draft legislation came to the VAT Executive meeting for approval in August, 2005 and was passed through Parliament as regulations²⁷ on November 21, to take force from January 1, 1986, superseding the old Tasmanian Wine Certification scheme. Participation in the new scheme was voluntary, but any grower wishing to represent their wine as 100% Tasmanian was required to register with the Commissioner for Licensing, providing details of their operation prior to vintage. Vintage grape production audits and post-vintage wine production audits were to be carried out by officers of the Department of Agriculture and the Licensing Commission. Growers would then submit individual wines, with a sample of their label, to the Director of Agriculture when applying for Appellation.

The Tasmanian Wine Appellation of Origin Scheme was officially launched by the Minister for Licensing, Geoff Davis, on December 10, 1985 at the Aberfeldy Cellars. The Minister acknowledged the efforts of the Vineyards Association of Tasmania and in particular its President Claudio Alcorso in pursuing appellation over the last five years. There is no doubt that Alcorso saw it as a personal mission and the greatest contribution he could make to the industry.

²⁶ *Australian Financial Review*, (Sydney). 2 September, 1985, p.2

²⁷ The system was first trialled through the introduction of regulations and established by legislation under the Liquor and Gaming Act in 1990.

The legislation was designed to protect the growing industry from misrepresentation and hopefully qualify Tasmania for membership of the prestigious OIV or International Organisation of Vine and Wine in Paris. At this time there were still only nine vineyards in the state producing wine for sale, with another 20 due to come on line over the next few vintages.

Tasmania was not alone in wanting to reassure consumers with guarantees of origin. The Mudgee winemakers in NSW had instituted their own local, self-administered appellation system in 1978. In Western Australia the Scheme for the Regional Certification of Wines covered the Margaret River and Mount Barker areas and was administered by the Department of Agriculture. In Victoria, the Victorian Wine Industry Association was working with the State Government to institute the Victorian Wine Authentication Scheme²⁸. The Tasmanian scheme was however the first to be enshrined in State legislation.

The Department of Agriculture was now becoming active in promoting viticulture in Tasmania and commissioned the Tasmanian Film Corporation to produce a promotional video “Vineyards of Tasmania”. The film was officially released in October, 1985 and provides a valuable snapshot of the industry at that time. The Department was also proactive in appointing Fred Peacock as the first full time viticultural officer, with responsibility for the industry and the Tasmanian Appellation Scheme.

1985 was big year for new vineyards. Four new vineyards were planted in the south of the state. Challenging Don Buchanan for the title of first resident winemaker in Tasmania were Bruce Gilham, who, with his wife Jane, planted the D’Entrecasteaux Vineyard at Gardners Bay in the Huon in 1985. Bruce had experience in many regions of France and Jane was studying wine science at Charles Sturt University. Three hectares were planted in a French style terraced vineyard with the emphasis on pinot noir and cabernet but with no less than 30 varieties trialled. The Gilhams also produced a range of fruit ports and liqueurs, sold from a rustic cellar door. Bruce Gilham was also one of the few critics of

²⁸ The Victorian scheme collapsed in 1988

the Tasmanian appellation scheme, calling it “misguided, misleading and inappropriate”²⁹

Dennis Pooley was a well known Hobart businessman and founding member of the Hobart Beef and Burgundy Club. He retired in 1984 and moved with his wife Margaret, to a 40 hectare property in the Coal River Valley, where they planted the half hectare Cooina Vale vineyard to pinot noir and riesling. Since Dennis’ death in 1993, the vineyard has been expanded to four hectares and is run by Margaret Pooley with her grandson Matthew.

Alan Bird planted 500 vines at Palmara Vineyard near Richmond in 1985, using pinot noir, cabernet sauvignon, chardonnay and some minor varieties from Uplands Nursery. Small quantities were produced in 1988 and 1989, with the first vintage offered for sale, from cellar door only, in 1990. Wines are made on the property, and the vineyard has since been expanded to more than a hectare. In 1993 Alan Bird took over the management of Uplands vineyard with the wine marketed under the Pembroke label.

The fourth vineyard established in the south in 1985 was by Charlie and Robyn Lewis at their Milford property, with one hectare planted exclusively to pinot noir.

Moorilla also expanded in this year, with a 10 hectare development on a neighbouring property with a long term grape purchase contract.

The northern vineyards of Buchanan Wines at Loira on the West Tamar and Rochembe at Pipers River, both planted in 1985, have already been mentioned. On the East coast, John Fenn-Smith, a neighbor of Geoff Bull at Freycinet Vineyard, decided to follow suit and planted Coombend Vineyard, initially in 1985 exclusively with cabernet sauvignon. Riesling followed in 1988, and sauvignon blanc in 1989, with the vineyard expanding to five hectares. The wines were made in the early years by Geoff Bull at Freycinet, and later by Andrew Hood, with a cellar door opened in 1998.

²⁹ *The Tasmanian Mail*. 16 July, 1986

The vote of confidence shown by French champagne house Roederer with their investment in Heemskerk, the Swiss Rochemcombe development and the 20 hectare vineyard going ahead for Taltarni created an air of optimism in the industry only slightly tempered by difficult vintages in 1985, 1986 and 1987. After a drought year in 1984, growers were faced with record cold in 1985, record rain in 1986 and a cool and cloudy ripening period in 1987. The average yield for Tasmanian vineyards in 1985 was a miserable 1.4 tonnes per hectare, creeping up to 2.1 in 1986 and 2.2 in 1987. Nevertheless enthusiasm was high and the number of vineyards was set to double in the last five years of the 1980s, with more than 40 new vineyards planted. Media praise continued – James Halliday writing in June, 1986 that

*the Tasmanian industry is destined to play an important role in the development of Australian premium wine. Progress may be slow, but the approach is thoroughly professional. The rewards will come.*³⁰

Halliday was still vacillating about the future of cabernet sauvignon in Tasmania- in an article headed “where pinot noir calls the tune”, he wrote

*I must confess to having changed my mind on several occasions about Pipers Brook cabernet sauvignon. Initially I was enthusiastic; then I went through a period of relative disenchantment.....I even went so far as to suggest that the region is basically not suited to the variety. I must now concede that I was wrong. Given time, these wines throw off the dusty herbaceous flavours of their youth, assuming instead all of the style, structure and finesse of a classed-growth Bordeaux.*³¹

In September 1986, the Minister for Licensing, Geoff Pearsall, presented the first Tasmanian Appellation Certificates to Pipers Brook, Moorilla Estate, Freycinet Vineyard and St Matthias Vineyard and the appellation scheme was finally put into practice.

St Matthias had picked their first vintage in 1986 and in December opened their cellar door, built in the style of a 19th century church. The Premier Robin Gray presided and hoisted a Tasmanian flag to mark the occasion, which was attended by a who’s who of the Tasmanian wine industry. Close to Launceston, and with spectacular views over the

³⁰ *The Weekend Australian*. 21-22 June, 1986, p19

³¹ *Ibid.* 5-6 September, 1987 p. 23

Tamar, it was to prove a popular stop for Tasmanian and visiting wine lovers, offering not only the St Matthias range but also Pipers Brook, Heemskerk, Moorilla and Glengarry wines.

At the end of 1986, the State Government announced that licence fees in Tasmania would rise by 11% from January 1, 1987. This move did not impress the Vineyards Association, who pointed out that in other wine producing states, sales from the vineyard were subject to a flat licence fee ranging from zero in Western Australia to \$700 in NSW. In Tasmania, a producer who sold 500 cases at \$100 per case from the vineyard would be subject to a licence fee of \$4,400. However, the 1987 Tasmanian budget brought good news from the tax man for a change, with premier Robin Gray announcing that the retail tax exemption for cellar door sales, introduced in 1986, would be extended by another four years.

A number of significant vineyards were established in 1986. Steve Hyde was a psychiatrist from New Zealand who became interested in viticulture when he met Gavin Scott, who was at that time working at the pharmacy at the Launceston General Hospital. In 1984, Heemskerk had decided to sell the Legana Vineyard and at the auction, Hyde and Scott worked with a neighbouring farmer who bought the property agreeing to lease the vineyard to Hyde and Scott. Hyde was also leasing Bill Mitchell's Tamarway vineyard. Wine from both vineyards was made in 1985 at Scott's Glengarry winery and released under the McEwins label. The 1986 wines from Legana were released as Rotherhythe, and Steve and Shelagh Hyde took that name for the vineyard they started planting at Gravelly Beach in 1986. The varieties were predominantly pinot noir, with some chardonnay and smaller blocks of cabernet sauvignon and merlot, the cuttings coming from Legana, Pipers Brook, Glengarry and the vine nursery at St Patricks. First vintage from the vineyard was in 1990 and still incorporated fruit from Legana and Tamarway, with the wines made at Delamere. The wines were made at Rotherhythe by

Steve Hyde from 1984. As a self taught winemaker Hyde enjoyed considerable success with a remarkable show record, particularly for pinot noir.³²

Probably the coldest vineyard in the state was also planted that year when Maree and Roger Taylor, working with Maree's father Barry Flude, planted the first vines at their high altitude Lake Barrington vineyard in the north west. The dream was to produce a premium sparkling wine. The first wines, made by Andrew Hood, were produced in 1990 and a cellar door was opened at the picturesque mountain vineyard by the State Treasurer, Tony Rundle in 1993. Roger Taylor, a Launceston gynaecologist, died suddenly in 1994 at the age of 53, and Maree Taylor decided to continue to realize his dream. The first *Alexandra* sparkling wine (named after the daughter born just after Roger's death) was the 1993 vintage, released in 1996. The wine won the Hobart Show Trophy for sparkling wine that year and the *Alexandra* has ever since been regarded as one of Tasmania's premium sparkling wines.

On the east coast, Rodney Lyne, whose family had farmed the Spring Vale property since 1826, chose grape growing purely as a farming diversification. Encouraged by the success of nearby Craigie Knowe and Freycinet, and advised by Fred Peacock, he planted a hectare in 1986, almost all pinot noir, with just a little chardonnay and cabernet sauvignon, obtaining all the cuttings from Freycinet. Geoff Bull made the first vintage of Spring Vale in 1990 at Freycinet. The vineyard was gradually expanded with significant plantings of chardonnay, pinot gris and gewurtztraminer to a total of seven hectares. From 1992, the wines were made by Andrew Hood at Cambridge until a winery was built at Spring Vale in 2002, prompted by the availability of Lyne's daughter Kristen, a qualified winemaker and her viticulturist husband, David Cush. After frost decimated crops in 1995 and 1996, Spring Vale installed a 10 metre high wind machine to address the problem, one of the first in the state. From the first vintage of pinot noir in 1990,

³² Stephen Hyde, *Oral History Recording No.5* (Launceston: 2010).

which won multiple gold medals, the vineyard has gone from strength to strength, acquiring an enviable reputation for both pinot noir, and the aromatic white varieties.³³

Two smaller vineyards were established in the south that year. Industrial chemist Kerry Carland and his wife Laurel planted about 1500 vines on a block overlooking the Derwent River at Granton, a mixture of pinot noir, cabernet sauvignon, merlot and cabernet franc. The vineyard, called Laurel Bank, was subsequently enlarged to two hectares with a hectare of sauvignon blanc in 1994. The tiny vineyard made its mark by winning the Most Successful Exhibitor Trophy at the 1995 Hobart Show, with a gold medal for its 1993 pinot noir, made by Julian Alcorso at Moorilla. In 1986, orchardists Tony and Angela McDermott planted the small Orani vineyard at Sorell with pinot noir, riesling and chardonnay. First wine for sale was in 1992, a pinot noir made by Julian Alcorso.

The Vineyards Association of Tasmania was keen to have representation at the Australian Wine Industry Convention in Adelaide in May and the Australian Society of Viticulture and Oenology Clonal Seminar in Canberra in November, 1986. All attempts to have Fred Peacock of the Department of Agriculture attend these conferences were rejected by the Department, despite offers of VAT financial assistance. In the end, Peacock took leave of absence from the Department and attended both conferences, with VAT covering his expenses. He reported to members at a general meeting in December. Peacock was also to attend the New Zealand Cool Climate Symposium in March, 1988, on behalf of the VAT.

Claudio Alcorso had been consistently pushing for Tasmania to become a member of the OIV, the International Organisation of Vine and Wine, believing that this would give the local appellation scheme some real international standing and credibility. He had a friend and ally in Pio Taliaco, his cousin, who had a vineyard in Tuscany. Taliaco had first visited Tasmania, at Alcorso's invitation, in 1977, and had become interested both in Tasmanian viticulture and the move to appellation. Taliaco eventually settled in

³³ Rodney Lyne, *Oral History Recording No. 45* (East Coast: 2010).

Tasmania with his family and became a shareholder in Bream Creek, although still spending part of each year in Italy. He was friendly with Mario Fregoni, currently the head of the OIV back in Italy and offered to help the VAT to gain OIV membership. The VAT organized a three day symposium in Hobart in September, 1987 as part of the International Year of Vine and Wine. Pio Taliaco spoke to the group about the importance of appellation, and was authorized to represent Tasmania at the International Assizes on the Vine and Wine in Rome in October. He was one of only two Australian delegates³⁴ to the international meeting and addressed the conference on “the world economy of vine and wine”. Because of Tasmania’s appellation status, he was co-opted into the CIDEAO, which translates as *International Centre of Documentation and Study on Appellations of Origin*, and Hobart was honoured as an International City of the Vine and Wine, with a Certificate presented to Hobart Lord Mayor Doone Kennedy on his return to Tasmania in November.³⁵

By this time the Tasmanian Development Authority was an enthusiastic promoter of Tasmanian viticulture and had invested over a million dollars in the industry. In 1987, the Authority, in conjunction with VAT, produced a promotional booklet entitled *Quality Varietal Wine from Tasmania*. In January, 1988, the TDA arranged a visit by Dr Michel Salgues, the French CEO of Roederer’s vineyards in California and generally acknowledged as the finest sparkling winemaker in the United States. Dr Salgues met with Tasmanian winemakers in the south and north of the state. In the same year, the TDA produced a booklet *Tasmania, a new wine-producing island*, reproducing a paper presented by Andrew Pirie to the Lincoln College International Symposium for Cool Climate Viticulture and Oenology in New Zealand in January, 1988. In it Pirie summed up the state of Tasmanian viticulture as he saw it:

An overwhelming impression from the conference is that Tasmania is clearly not a marginal viticultural region, but rather an underdeveloped temperate grape-growing region. Tasmanian advantages include freedom from phylloxera, good autumn ripening conditions and ideal seasonal temperatures for mid-season premium cultivars like pinot noir,

³⁴ The other was a Commonwealth Government representative

³⁵ Pio Taliaco, *Oral History Recording No. 35* (Hobart: 2010).

*chardonnay and riesling. Disadvantages include spring winds, lack of large contiguous suitable sites and lack of knowledge of grape growing in this particular climate.*³⁶

1988 saw a changing of the guard at the head of the Vineyards Association of Tasmania, with the resignations from office of Claudio Alcorso and Graham Wiltshire, who had held the respective roles of President and Secretary since the Association's inception in 1974. Alcorso and Wiltshire had been the founders of VAT and, with Andrew Pirie, the driving forces behind it for 15 years. Both shared the conviction that the state had enormous potential and that its future depended on quality not quantity. In a farewell message in the VAT Newsletter, Wiltshire expressed surprise that what started with correspondence between Alcorso and himself almost 20 years ago had grown into a thriving Association with more than 70 members. In retrospect, he saw the Reynolds "winegate" scandal as helpful in gaining the support of Government for appellation controls and believed that achieving appellation and the unwavering emphasis on quality had laid a solid foundation for the industry. But Wiltshire also issued a challenge, saying that he believed that VAT had lost direction and suggesting that the organization should be restructured to better meet the needs of members.³⁷ The meeting conferred Life Membership on Claudio Alcorso, as a retiring member, but not at this stage on Graham Wiltshire who would it was hoped remain an active member of the Association for some years to come. Andrew Pirie was elected President with Leigh Gawith as the new secretary. Richard Richardson became secretary in 1989 with Andrew Pirie continuing as president and Leigh Gawith taking up the role of treasurer.

The industry organization suffered another loss at the end of 1988 with the resignation of the State Viticultural Officer, Fred Peacock, from the Department of Agriculture, to take up a position as vineyard manager with Moorilla Estate. Peacock had enjoyed a close association with VAT and had represented the Association in many industry forums, nationally and internationally. Ben Wagner was appointed to take his place.

³⁶ Andrew Pirie, *Tasmania, a New Wine-Producing Island* (Hobart: Tasmanian Development Authority, 1988). P.11

³⁷ *Vineyards Association of Tasmania Newsletter*. May, 1988 p.2

In 1987 and 1988 a number of significant vineyards³⁸ were founded. In 1975, Bill Casimaty had established a small trial vineyard at his historic GlenAyr property near Richmond, but had not developed it any further. In 1987 Tony Jordan of Domaine Chandon in the Yarra Valley and Gary Crittenden of Dromana Estate on the Mornington Peninsula had been looking for a vineyard site in the Derwent Valley to produce fruit for sparkling wine. George Park of Stoney Vineyard happened to show them some analyses of the fruit from Strathayr and they approached Casimaty to propose a three way joint venture to develop a sparkling vineyard on his property. An integral part of the plan was that the vineyard would be able to access water from the proposed South East Irrigation Scheme. An official launch was held in November, 1987, with the Premier, Robin Gray, planting the first cuttings in the vine nursery. Ten hectares of the new Tolpuddle Vineyard were planted out in 1988 to the Champagne varieties of pinot noir and chardonnay with Chris Harrington appointed vineyard manager, and the vineyard was progressively expanded to 50 hectares over the next 15 years.³⁹ The long term arrangement with Domaine Chandon was to include a single vineyard Tasmanian sparkling wine every year, but the Tasmanian Cuvee has not been a regular product in the range. Nevertheless the indirect involvement of the prestigious Champagne house Moet et Chandon was another lift to industry confidence and optimism. A controversial aspect of the development was the importation of rootlings from the mainland, with Department of Agriculture approval. This approval was given without any consultation with the industry and VAT lodged a strong protest with the Department, pointing out that it endangered Tasmania's prized phylloxera-free status. Their point was to be reinforced in 1991, when phylloxera was discovered on Brown Brothers' Whitland vineyard in the King Valley of Victoria.

Another development driven by sparkling wine production was Clover Hill in the northeast. Dominique Portet, managing director and winemaker at Taltarni Wines in Victoria had visited Tasmania in 1985 looking for a vineyard site and had purchased a 66

³⁸ From 1987 more than 300 vineyards were established in Tasmania. Only the more significant will be dealt with in the text.

³⁹ Bill Casimaty, *Oral History Recording Nos. 14 and 29* (Hobart: 2010).

hectare property at Lebrina, not far from Pipers Brook. Planting proceeded in 1987, under vineyard manager Chris Smith, with an initial 12 hectares planted to pinot noir, chardonnay and pinot meunier. The property now has 21 hectares under vine. The base wines are made in Tasmania and finished and bottled in Victoria. First vintage was a blanc de blanc⁴⁰ in 1992, but since then the cuvee has included all three varieties, and the Clover Hill brand has become established as one of Australia's top sparkling wines, with many trophies and gold medals to its credit.

Dominique Portet also had a hand in the foundation of Dalrymple vineyard in Pipers Brook. Bertel Sundstrup was an oncologist working in Launceston, married to Anne Mitchell, daughter of Bill Mitchell, who founded Tamarway vineyard in 1969. Anne's sister Jill Mitchell was a public relations consultant in Melbourne and amongst her clients was Dominique Portet of Taltarni vineyard. Knowing that both Portet and her brother in law were interested in planting wine grapes in Tasmania, she got the two together. Sundstrup was offered a block adjoining Pipers Brook Vineyard and bought it on Portet's advice, with a loose arrangement that the fruit would be sold to Taltarni. First planting was half a hectare of pinot noir in 1987, with the vineyard gradually expanded to eight hectares of pinot noir and chardonnay over the next three years. Early pinot noirs were made by Nicholas Butler at Holm Oak, with the chardonnays made by Jean Baptiste Lecaillon at Heemskerk. No fruit was ever sold to Taltarni. From 1996, Bert Sundstrup made his own wines on the vineyard. In 1991, against all expert advice, Sundstrup planted almost two hectares of sauvignon blanc, a decision vindicated by the first vintage in 1994 which won a trophy, two gold medals and was judged top wine in a lineup of Australian and New Zealand sauvignon blancs. The vineyard has acquired a remarkable reputation for quality and consistency of all three of its varieties, but is probably best known for its pinot noir.

At Heemskerk, the Board had decided on expansion and the company was, on Graham Wiltshire's advice, looking in the Tamar Valley which ripened fruit much earlier than Pipers Brook. Wiltshire was friendly with Dr Don Boden, who, after a trip to Beaujolais

⁴⁰ A blanc de blanc is a sparkling wine made purely from chardonnay.

in 1986, had planted three hectares of gamay on land purchased from Dr Robert Boyle at Rosevears. He called the vineyard Rebecca after the ship, built in the Tamar Valley, which carried the founders of Melbourne. In 1987, Dr Boyle decided to sell the whole property and Wiltshire and Boden agreed to form a group of investors to buy it. The 10 hectares purchased by Boden, and including the gamay vineyard, was incorporated into the deal and there were 15 shareholders in all, with an additional five shares held by Heemskerk and Roederer. In 1988, 20 hectares were planted with pinot noir and chardonnay, with the fruit contracted to Heemskerk and the name Rebecca now applying to the enlarged vineyard.

There was a new development at Bicheno on the east coast, where a successful abalone diver and cray fisherman and exporter, Brian Franklin, was looking for investment opportunities and saw what was happening at the nearby Freycinet vineyard, established by fellow abalone diver, Geoff Bull. Initial planting at his Apsley Gorge vineyard was 2000 vines of pinot noir and chardonnay in 1989, with the cuttings coming from Freycinet. The vineyard has since expanded to six hectares, mostly pinot noir. After a couple of vintages at Freycinet, Franklin decided that the place to learn how to make wine from the Burgundy varieties was in fact in Burgundy, and since 1990, he has worked the northern hemisphere vintage in Gevray Chambertin in the heart of Burgundy.⁴¹ From the first vintage in 1993, the wines were made by Andrew Hood, until the Apsley Gorge winery was opened in 1999.⁴²

After looking for a vineyard site in the Mornington Peninsula, Rod and Kyra Cuthbert decided to return to their native Tasmania and bought land at Rowella on the West Tamar, near Holm Oak vineyard. Planting began, with much advice from Fred Peacock, in 1988, all to white varieties, with chardonnay, semillon, sauvignon blanc and chenin blanc. Later the chenin blanc was removed and pinot gris and gewurtztraminer added, with the vineyard expanded to four hectares. The vineyard was called Rowella, but the wines were released under the Iron Pot Bay label. The first vintage in 1990 was made by

⁴¹ In 12 French vintages, Franklin has missed only one- in 1991.

⁴² Brian Franklin, *Oral History Recording No. 44* (East Coast: 2010).

Andrew Hood, newly arrived in the state and working at Stoney vineyard in Campania. The decision was made to make an unwooded chardonnay, the first in the state and a style which has become a trademark of the vineyard. The Cuthberts were also the first to produce a semillon/sauvignon blanc blend.⁴³

Pipers Brook expanded by acquiring two nearby vineyards, St Patrick's and Pellion. Andrew Pirie had managed the Pellion vineyard since its establishment in 1987.

A number of other small vineyards to start at the end of the 1980s went on to make a mark in the industry, including John and Sheila Bezemer's Brook Eden, Lalla Gully established by Rod Ascui and Kim Seagram, Rita and Robert Richter's Grey Sands, Neil and Julianne Snare's Winstead at Bagdad, Barry and Cathy Edwards' Craigow in the Coal River Valley and Silkwood, established by Gavin Scott after the sale of Glengarry.

Glengarry Vineyard was auctioned in September, 1988 and, after competitive bidding, was sold to Don Buchanan and Associates for \$306,000, a price which had the industry smiling. It was particularly reassuring for the Tasmanian Development Authority, which had invested heavily in the industry, to see that developed vineyard land had such a high market value. The associates with Don Buchanan in the purchase were Carl Johnson, a wholesale liquor merchant from Queensland and Launceston pathologist Michael Beamish, who was to play a major role in future wine industry developments in the state.

There were two distinguished visitors to the state in 1988. The first was Dr Richard Smart, an internationally recognized viticulturist who was then working for the New Zealand wine industry at the Ruakura Research Station. He ran a workshop for VAT, emphasizing his belief that great wine is made in the vineyard. Smart was to become an important figure in Tasmanian viticulture over the next 20 years. The second VIP was Her Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth II who was served dinner at Government House in Hobart on April 24 with the Tasmanian trout and quail accompanied by a 1987 St

⁴³ Rod Cuthbert, *Oral History Recording No. 6* (Launceston: 2010).

Matthias Rhine Riesling and a 1986 Moorilla Pinot Noir. Her Majesty's opinion of the wines is not recorded.

The end of the 80s also marked the beginning of two major food and wine events in the state which would prove immensely valuable to vineyards and an integral part of their promotional programs. Festivale began in 1988 as part of Launceston's Bicentenary celebrations. It was a huge street party with lots of food and wine stalls. Since then it has grown into one of Australia's premier food and wine events, moving to its permanent home in City Park in 1996, and has become an annual showcase for the best of Tasmanian food and wine. Just a year later, Hobart followed suit with the first of its annual Taste of Tasmania events on Prince's Wharf No. 1, to coincide with the finish of the annual Sydney to Hobart yacht race. It attracted 30,000 visitors in 1991 and doubled that in 1992⁴⁴. Both have become essential dates on the calendar of every wine producer in the state, and offer eager tasters a choice of more than 200 different Tasmanian wines.

A less pleasant incident towards the end of the year was a serious case of spray damage to Tamar Valley vineyards. The main damage was to Laurie and Adele Wing's St Matthias vineyard at Rosevears where all eight hectares were damaged by hormonal spray drift from aerial spraying. The damage to the vineyard was exacerbated by the wide publicity which created doubts about the safety of the St Matthias wines. Laurie Wing recalls that, after several difficult years, hopes had been high for the 1988 vintage and this blow caused them to think about selling the vineyard and moving on with their lives.

VAT responded to the damage by approaching chemical spray merchants and spray operators, and suggesting that members educate their neighbours on the dangers of spray drift.

The 1980s closed with the industry in a precarious position. On the one hand, long term optimism was high, with positive wine press feedback on the wines and the entry of Moet and Chandon, Roederer and Taltarni inspiring confidence. From a marketing point of

⁴⁴ "The Taste" today attracts some 250,000 visitors annually

view the demand for Tasmanian wine far exceeded the supply and looked likely to do so for some years to come. On the other hand short term cash flow problems were almost universal. Technical problems, poor vintages and high interest rates were a toxic combination for small businesses.

Andrew Pirie summed it up nicely in his VAT President's Report in May, 1988:

One of the frequently asked questions on Tasmania's viticulture is, if it is proving so successful now, why didn't it happen before? I think any practicing vigneron at this latitude knows the answer- because it is so difficult to get everything right all the time. Every season we have a new disease or problem achieving prominence, but fortunately the rewards are high for those who can overcome the obstacles and find the right answers.⁴⁵

The average yield for Tasmanian vineyards in the five years 1985 to 1989 was 2.8 tonnes per hectare. To put that in perspective, the average yield for Australian vineyards in 2009 was just under 11 tonnes per hectare⁴⁶. To look at a contemporary comparison, the yield for pinot noir in the Tasmanian 1987 vintage was 2.7 tonnes per hectare, compared with 5.6 tonnes for pinot noir in Margaret River in the same year, and 6.7 tonnes in Coonawarra (the national average yield for pinot noir was 7.1 tonnes).⁴⁷ Buyers were queuing up for the wines, but the vineyards could not produce them.

A string of poor vintages was partly to blame, but it was really the predictable "pioneer problems" as growers struggled to find the right varieties and the right clones of those varieties for their particular sites, the best trellising, pruning and irrigation regimes and to cope with the ongoing problems of birds, wind, frost disease and the difficulty of ripening fruit in a genuinely cool climate region.

On top of that, as small business borrowers, vigneron had to cope with a decade of double digit interest rates, peaking at a crippling 20% at the end of the 80s, so that

⁴⁵ *Vineyards Association of Tasmania Newsletter*. May, 1988 p.1

⁴⁶ Caroline Gunning-Trant, *Australian Wine Grape Production Projections to 2011-2012* (Canberra: ABARE, 2010). P.7

⁴⁷ *Australian Grapegrower and Winemaker*, (Sydney). July, 1988 p.17

cashflow was a perennial problem, making expansion difficult. The future was bright, but only for those who could survive to see it.

The financial situation was also largely to blame for the small number of new vineyard startups- the 71 productive hectares of 1984 had crept up to 107 hectares by 1989. Nevertheless the period saw the birth of 'Sparkling Tasmania', with investment by both Champagne houses Roederer at Heemskerk, and Moet and Chandon (through their Victorian offshoot, Domaine Chandon) at Tolpuddle. Taltarni's development at Clover Hill was also to provide a flagship product as the state's reputation for sparkling wine continued to grow.

On the national scene, there were major industry changes going on, but few of them caused any ripples in Tasmania. The good news was that table wine consumption continued to increase- from 17.3 litres per person in 1980 to 21.3 litres in 1987⁴⁸, with the greatest growth in chardonnay, a variety well suited to Tasmania's Burgundian climate. The appointment of Hazel Murphy as Australia's wine ambassador in the UK in 1985 led to a rapid growth in exports from 10.8 million litres in 1986 to 21.3 million litres in 1987 and an astonishing 39.3 million litres in 1988, worth almost \$100 million to the Australian economy⁴⁹. This booming market, aided by a devalued Australian dollar, meant little to Tasmanian growers who were struggling to keep up supply to local markets, but would become important later. The other significant structural factor was the continuing growth by acquisition of the major companies- Penfolds alone acquired Kaiser Stuhl in 1982, the Wynns Seaview group in 1985, and Tollana and Lindemans in the later 80s. Balancing that was the parallel growth of smaller independent wineries at the boutique end of the market, where Tasmania was playing its small part.

So at the end of the 80s, Australia was sliding into recession- the Reserve Bank cash rate was at 17.5%, the share market lost 26% of its value in a little more than a year and the commercial property market was collapsing. The Reserve Bank cut the cash rate 14 times to a low point of 4.75% in July, 1993, but despite their efforts Australia suffered a deep

⁴⁸ Beeston, *Concise History of Australian Wine*. P.260

⁴⁹ Ibid. P. 262

recession during 1990 and 1991, which would play its part in a shakeup of the Tasmanian wine industry through the first half of the 1990s.

CHAPTER 9

SETBACKS AND SUCCESSES

Tasmania's growing reputation as a premium cool climate area for wine grapes was beginning to attract immigrants with both capital and the right skills. The turn of the decade saw a number of important arrivals in Tasmania, all attracted by the potential of viticulture in a genuinely cool climate. The names of Steve Lubiana, Andrew Hood, Peter Althaus, Andrew Vasiljuk and Greg O'Keefe are all prominent in the ongoing story of Tasmanian wine. All but Althaus were qualified and experienced winemakers, who played significant roles in raising the professional level of winemaking in the state, and Althaus was extremely knowledgeable and well connected in the world of European wine.

Andrew Hood was Tasmanian born and completed a degree in Agricultural Science at the University of Tasmania. In 1973, he was employed as a microbiologist at the Australian Wine Research Institute in Adelaide, working for Dr Bryce Rankine. Hood was on good terms with Brian Croser, who started the Wine Science course at Riverina College of Advanced Education¹ in Wagga in 1976. In 1977 Croser persuaded Hood to join him as a lecturer in wine science. Towards the end of the 1980s, Hood was looking to move on. His experience at Wagga had involved a great deal of practical winemaking at the University's commercial winery, and he saw his future in that direction. He had become friendly with Stuart Bryce, a student at Wagga, who was planning a venture in Tasmania and had also seen a report prepared by Oenotech Consulting for the Tasmanian Development Authority, predicting that by 1994, the state would be producing at least 200 tonnes of grapes beyond the capacity of existing Tasmanian wineries and suggesting that a contract winery would be needed. With Stuart Bryce, he approached the Tasmanian Development Authority for assistance in building a winery at Lebrina in the north east, but without success. Despite that setback, Andrew Hood and his wife Jenny

¹ Later to become Charles Sturt University

made the decision to return to his home state to start a contract winemaking business. He was able to use a section of the Moorilla winery for his first vintage in 1990, processing 16 tonnes for six clients. 1990 also saw the first wine released under his own Wellington label, a lighter style *Easy Cabernet* made from Elsewhere cabernet sauvignon, which won a gold medal at its first show outing². A Wellington chardonnay from Rowella vineyard fruit was added in 1991, followed by a pinot noir in 1992, from grapes grown at Holm Oak. Peter Althaus had bought the Stoney vineyard from George and Priscilla Park in 1990 and had excess space in his new winery, which he offered to Andrew Hood for the 1991 vintage. After three vintages at Stoney, it was clear that the business was outgrowing the facility, and Hood approached the Tasmanian Development Authority for a loan to build a contract winery. This time he was successful, and the winery was constructed on two hectares at Cambridge leased and then purchased from the University of Tasmania, just in time to process 100 tonnes for the 1994 vintage.³ Hood has played a major role in lifting the standards of Tasmanian winemaking and has been an active figure in every aspect of the industry.

Steve Lubiana's pedigree in wine goes back at least five generations. His grandfather migrated from Trieste in Italy in the early 1950s, and converted an old distillery at Griffith, NSW, into a small winery. After completing his winemaking degree at Roseworthy, Steve broadened his experience by working six vintages in three years, with European stints in Champagne, Tuscany and Cognac. In 1985, making wine in Champagne, his long term ambition was born- to make great sparkling wine in Australia, and this was a major factor in choosing Tasmania for his future enterprise. With his wife Monique, he moved to Tasmania in 1990 and bought land at Granton on the Derwent River, a site that was frost-free and offered terra rossa soil over a limestone base. The first two and a half hectares of what was to become a 25 hectare vineyard were planted in 1991, with the sparkling wine varieties chardonnay and pinot noir. Since then they have added sauvignon blanc, pinot gris, riesling, merlot and the Italian varietal nebbiolo. As they have developed their vineyard and winery, Steve and Monique Lubiana have been

² At the 1990 Australian Small Winemakers' Show in Stanthorpe, Queensland

³ Andrew Hood, *Oral History Recording No. 8* (Hobart: 2010).

single minded and uncompromising in their quest for quality and they are now generally recognized as one of Tasmania's premium producers, particularly for sparkling wine.

Peter Althaus was Manager of the technical section of IBM in Switzerland, but was looking for a change and decided to turn his hobby, wine, into his profession. Looking to the southern hemisphere, he and his wife Ruth attended a cool climate conference in New Zealand in 1988. This led them to Tasmania where they looked at a number of properties and tasted the wines. The wines at the top of their tasting lists were always from Stoney vineyard so, back in Switzerland, when they heard that Stoney was for sale it was an easy decision.

Returning to Tasmania, they purchased George and Priscilla Park's Stoney vineyard in 1989, but being on a tourist visa, had to return to Switzerland. George Park agreed to manage the vineyard until they could move to Tasmania permanently. Peter and Ruth Althaus returned to Tasmania in time to make the wines of the 1990 vintage, with equipment imported from Europe. They invested a million dollars in two hectares of new vineyard, an irrigation pipeline and new dams, and a 100 tonne winery constructed for the 1991 vintage. Peter Althaus was also responsible for keeping Andrew Hood in the state in 1991, by offering him the use of the new winery for three vintages, until the new Stoney plantings came on line. The vineyard is now 12 hectares, cropping about 80 tonnes a year, with four varieties, cabernet sauvignon, merlot, pinot noir and sauvignon blanc. The premium wines are released as Domaine A, with Stoney as an earlier drinking range. Despite the general move away from cabernet sauvignon in the state, Peter Althaus still sees it as his flagship wine, and, despite premium prices, the wines attract eager buyers and critical acclaim.⁴

Andrew Vasiljuk was a winemaker with experience in the Riverland, Cowra and Griffith. When Andrew and his wife Rose-Marie decided to establish their own vineyard and winery, they chose Tasmania. They planted the 4,500 vines in the Crosswinds vineyard in the Coal River Valley in 1990 and built a 75 tonne winery for their own fruit and for

⁴ Peter Althaus, *Oral History Recording No. 39* (Hobart: 2010).

contract winemaking, generally on a share-fruit basis. In 1994, they planted a second two hectare vineyard at Margate.

Greg O'Keefe graduated from Roseworthy in 1985 and the following year became winemaker at Normans Wines in McLaren Vale, responsible for a full range of wines, from sparkling to fortified. Towards the end of the 80s, he decided it was time to start his own wine business, and his Tasmanian wife was a factor in choosing Tasmania as a destination. After making small batches at John Austwick's Craigie Knowe vineyard in 1990, O'Keefe formed a partnership with Mike Fishburn and was able to come to an arrangement with Gerald Ellis at Meadowbank to make his wine and to also use the winery for contract winemaking for other growers from the 1991 vintage. The first Fishburn and O'Keefe wines were a 1991 Pinot Noir Brut and 1991 Pinot Chardonnay, the first sparkling wines totally made in Tasmania⁵. The arrangement with Meadowbank lasted until 1998.⁶

Greg O'Keefe was one of the two founders of the Tasmanian Regional Wine Show.

His partner in the venture was Phil Laing, a school teacher, but also an enthusiastic wine lover, who became winemaker at Aberfeldy Cellars in 1989. They both saw a need for a show which would allow smaller Tasmanian vineyards, which did not meet the minimum quantities for the Royal Hobart Show, to enter their wines and get feedback from expert judges. Phil Laing had become friendly with James Halliday, through the annual Tasmania v Victoria wine options competition, and Halliday agreed to act as Chairman of Judges for the first show, a role he has now filled for more than 20 years. The first show was held on Saturday, February 23, 1991 at the Aberfeldy Cellars. Section A was for wines still in cask or tank, or bottled in lots of less than 50 dozen- the judging panel was James Halliday, Greg O'Keefe, Bob Richter and John Rozentals. The judging panel for Section B, bottled wines with more than 50 dozen, was Halliday, Phil Laing, Michelle Round and Tom Ellis. Richard and Dallas Richardson's Delamere Vineyard was the big winner, with their chardonnay winning the only gold medal and the trophies for best wine and most successful exhibitor. National wine writer Huon Hooke joined the panel for the

⁵ The Jansz wines were sent to Victoria for disgorging and finishing.

⁶ Greg O'Keefe, *Oral History Recording No. 25* (Victoria: 2010).

1992 show, held in Launceston. Sixteen wines were entered and three won gold medals the 1991 Sharmans Glenbothy Pinot Noir, which also won wine of the show⁷, the 1991 Notley Gorge Chardonnay, and the 1990 Panorama Cabernet Sauvignon.⁸

The annual involvement of Halliday and Hooke has been an enormous boon for the Tasmanian industry. To have two of the most influential and knowledgeable wine writers in the country involved in an annual review of the state's wines has been invaluable both in terms of building a national profile for the wines, and in providing expert feedback from judges who have a knowledge of Tasmanian styles and the evolution of the industry.

Another important arrival, but on a short term residency was Dr Walter Eggenberger, retired director of the Swiss Federal Research Station for Viticulture and Oenology. His visit was arranged and sponsored by VAT, mainly through the efforts of Andrew Pirie. Dr Eggenberger arrived in October, 1989 and spent six months in the state, giving lectures and workshops and visiting vineyards throughout Tasmania. As a direct result of his visit, the state viticulturist, Ben Wagner, spent four months at the Swiss Research Station later in 1990.

1990 was perhaps the best vintage in the history of the industry, with 937 tonnes of fruit vinified, at a yield of 7.4 tonnes per hectare. This was the third positive vintage in a row and provided a bit more relief from bank managers, and general confidence in the future. The Rochaix family and Alf Edgecombe demonstrated that confidence in practical terms in April when they opened their beautiful new winery designed by Launceston architect Bruce Goodsir, equipped with the latest wine making technology from Switzerland to process the 1990 vintage. In November, the Premier Michael Field opened the new Moorilla Estate's Wine Centre, with a restaurant and tasting area sitting in the middle of the vineyard.

Gerald Ellis, Greg O'Keefe and Dick Friend joined forces to open the Richmond Wine Centre, on Richmond's main street and showcasing the wines and fine produce of the region.

⁷ Causing some embarrassment for vigneron Mike Sharman, who was Show Society Chairman.

⁸ Phil Laing, *Oral History Recording No. 23* (Hobart: 2010).

Midway through the year, Moorilla made the decision to sell its Bream Creek vineyard, which, despite all efforts, had never been as productive as hoped. It went to auction in July, 1990 and was passed in with a reserve of \$270,000. It was subsequently sold to Moorilla's vineyard manager, Fred Peacock.

Don Knight, the first VAT Executive Officer, appointed in 1984, resigned and Paddy Baker was appointed to replace him. Baker was a Launceston based public relations consultant who had previously been manager of the Symmons Plains Racing Circuit.

The national peak body, the Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation, met in Tasmania for the first time in April, 1991. After a meeting at Pipers Brook vineyard⁹, the board met the Tasmanian industry at a dinner at Launceston's International Hotel, where the guest speaker was Tasmania's Commissioner for Licensing, Ren Middleton.

But undoubtedly the occasion of the year was the long awaited launch of the Heemskerk/Roederer sparkling wine in October. The new wine, labeled Jansz after the captain of one of Abel Tasman's ships on his 1642 voyage of discovery, was unveiled by Graham Wiltshire and the managing director of Champagne house Louis Roederer, Jean-Claude Rouzaud. Labelled Cuvee 1989, the wine contained 85% 1989 fruit, blended with oak aged wines from the 87 and 88 vintages, in the Champagne tradition. The wine was well received by wine writers with predictions that Tasmania would become one of the world's great sparkling wine regions. Celebratory press photos showed smiling pictures of Jean-Claude Rouzaud and Graham Wiltshire toasting the success of their joint venture, but behind the scenes tensions were mounting between Roederer and the Australian shareholders. Interestingly, the much heralded Jansz failed to win a medal at the 1991 Hobart Wine Show, supposedly because the judge in charge of that class believed that oak had no place in the flavour profile of sparkling wine¹⁰. Jansz has however gone on to be a flagship brand for Tasmania for two decades.

Other players were beginning to see the tourist potential of the wine industry and in 1991, Federal Hotels completed a state-wide survey of the industry preparatory to packaging

⁹ Andrew Pirie was a member of the AWBNC board.

¹⁰ *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 28 November, 1991, p.30

“Grip of the Grape” holidays. The survey document presents an interesting and frank assessment of the state’s early cellar doors.¹¹

In November, 1991, VAT, in conjunction with the Tasmanian Development Authority, held the first of its mainland Tasmanian Fine Wine Shows. Seventeen vineyards presented 72 wines to Sydney wine merchants, wine writers and the wine loving public over two days, with more than 800 people attending¹². The success of the venture, organized by Julian Alcorso for VAT and Jonathon Scott for the TDA, encouraged VAT to make this an annual event, alternating between Sydney and Melbourne.

The successful Sydney exercise also led to the first Tasmanian Winemakers’ Exhibition held at the Sheraton Hotel, Hobart on May 16, 1992, with 22 vineyards showing wine and 500 paying guests attending. Mainland wine writers Mark Shield, Jeremy Oliver and Jeni Port were guests and together chose the Mercury’s top dozen which was sold through the newspaper. A second Winemakers’ Exhibition was held in August.

Not to be outdone, Wrest Point Hotel Casino staged their annual Tasmanian Wine Fair in June, importing Wolf Blass as guest star. Blass was guest speaker at a lunch in Hobart and a dinner at the Country Club in Launceston, with public tastings at both venues.

The northern vineyards had staged their first festival in March, with the inaugural Tamar Valley and Pipers district Bacchanalia, organized by the George Town Enterprise Centre, offering a tasting tent in George Town and separate events at various vineyards. In the same month, Joan Webb opened her West Tamar Wine Centre at Exeter, representing seven local vineyards that were too small to run their own cellar door outlets economically.

In November, Moorilla Estate announced the acquisition of Laurie and Adele Wing’s St. Matthias vineyard at Rosevears in the Tamar Valley. The six hectare vineyard, with its successful cellar door operation, would provide Moorilla with a northern base and a reliable supply of fruit from one of the warmest vineyards in the state. The serious spray

¹¹ Sue Goldstone, "Information for Packaging "Grip of the Grape" Holidays," (Hobart: Federal Hotels, 1991).

¹² *Vineyards Association of Tasmania Newsletter*. December, 1991, p.1

drift damage to the vineyard and its consequences had been a significant factor in Laurie and Adele Wing's decision to sell. They were to continue running the cellar door for 18 months, after which Moorilla winemaker Julian Alcorso had plans to develop a restaurant and function centre on the vineyard.

During the year, the Tasmanian Development Authority and VAT had funded the first formal market research into the industry, designed to help wine producers increase market share and profitability. The main findings were no surprise to many in the industry- consumers perceived quality to be high, but prices even higher, and poor value for money. Availability was considered only fair and advertising was poor. The thrust of the report was that, while the product was considered excellent, more attention to marketing and promotion was urgently needed.¹³

The Vineyards Association had indeed formed a marketing group which first met on April 23, 1992 under the chairmanship of Andrew Pirie. Andrew Hood replaced Julian Alcorso as President of the Association at the Annual General Meeting in June. As 1992 was the last year for the relief of the State Government's wine tax, VAT lobbied successfully to have it extended to June, 1994. An updated vineyards brochure was released in October, 1992.

The aftermath of the national recession was having repercussions on the mainland with rationalisation being the order of the day. The family owned Hardy's Wine Company was forced into amalgamation with the Berri-Renmano group, becoming the publicly listed BRL Hardy. Several family companies such as McGuigan, Petaluma and Peter Lehmann chose to move to public listing as the capital demands of an expanding industry were considered to be beyond the means of a family company. Tasmania's flagship producer, Pipers Brook was itself to choose this path later in the decade. However, the weak Australian dollar continued to fuel the export boom, which saw Australian wine promoted as "bottled sunshine"- well made and well priced with plenty of fruit flavour.

¹³ David Thompson and Warren Sproule, *Tasmania Wine Industry- Marketing Information and Strategies to Improve Competitive Advantage* (Hobart: Tasmanian Development Authority, 1992). P.1

Pipers Brook was the first company to take advantage of the booming UK market, and in January, 1993 announced an agreement to sell 2000 cases of their early-drinking Tasmanian Wine Company label to the giant UK supermarket chain, Sainsbury's. Heemskerk was to follow later in the year with a shipment of 1000 cases of Jansz to the UK.

The relationship between Heemskerk and French Champagne house Roederer, which had started with such fanfare and high expectations, was becoming strained. Graham Wiltshire had spent two months at Roederer in France in 1988, and had asked Jean-Claude Rouzaud to send out a winemaker to help at Heemskerk, as Wiltshire would be increasingly involved with the development of the Rebecca vineyard on the West Tamar.

Rouzaud sent out a talented young winemaker, Jean-Baptiste Lecaillon, who took over some of the winemaking duties at Heemskerk, and was eventually given the role of chief winemaker, which caused a falling out with Graham Wiltshire. There was a further disagreement over the arrangements with Domaine Chandon for disgorging and finishing the Jansz sparkling wine. This was, in the Australian manner, a handshake agreement between Wiltshire and Tony Jordan, who trusted each other implicitly, but was completely unacceptable to the French who required a more formal arrangement, particularly where the agreement involved a rival French Champagne house¹⁴. A further complicating factor was the death of Bill Fesq in 1990, with his shares passing to his son Mark, who had little interest in the Tasmanian vineyard although he continued as Chairman and Director of the company. In 1991, Mark Fesq called a meeting of the Board, and throwing in his lot with Roederer, caused a spill of the Board. Graham Wiltshire was not re-elected as a director and lost his position as General Manager, which was made redundant. Roederer effectively had control of Heemskerk, the vineyard that Wiltshire had founded back in 1975, and management of the company was transferred to the offices of Fesq and Company in Sydney.

After a poor 1992 vintage, with late spring frosts reducing yields by 60% in some areas, growers were hopeful of a brighter 1993, and mainland companies like Penfolds, Hardy's

¹⁴ Moet et Chandon

and Domaine Chandon were all ready to pay premium price for pinot noir and chardonnay for their premium sparkling wines. Department of Primary Industry¹⁵ viticultural officer Ben Wagner was predicting a crop of between 1250 and 1300 tonnes.

In the ongoing contest between pinot noir and cabernet sauvignon as the state's premium red variety, pinot was beginning to inch ahead. Previous consensus had been that, while pinot was more consistent, the best cabernets were better wines than the best pinots. At the 1993 Tasmanian wine show, the 1991 Freycinet pinot noir won both the Best Wine Trophy and the Chairman's Trophy, with Chairman James Halliday calling it "a bloody beautiful wine...literally world class....a wine that could stand up well anywhere in the world"¹⁶. Medals were still evenly balanced with 10 pinots and 12 cabernets achieving bronze medal or better. Halliday's opinion was that warmer areas like the Tamar Valley could produce good cabernet but the pinots were "short on varietal character and elegance"¹⁷

Cooler regions like Pipers Brook could produce good pinot noir, but "light-bodied, herbaceous" cabernets.

Festivals continued to be an important element in wine marketing, with the Taste of Tasmania again attracting more than 60,000 people in Hobart, the second Tamar Valley and Pipers district Bacchanalia in George Town in April and the first Taste of the Huon Festival in March all well supported by local vineyards. Jazz in the Vineyard, now in its third year was proving popular in all parts of the state and this year drew its biggest crowds when Australia's international jazz great James Morrison appeared at Moorilla.

A major Tasmanian Wine Festival, based in the north, was announced for February, 1994, with 17 vineyards participating.

After the takeover of Heemskerk, Roederer had retained their interest in the 20 hectare Rebecca vineyard at Rosevears, but the Tasmanian shareholders were becoming increasingly uneasy over Roederer's management of the vineyard. Complicating matters,

¹⁵ The Department of Agriculture had become the Department of Primary Industry in 1992.

¹⁶ *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 28 February, 1993, p.52

¹⁷ *The Weekend Australian*. 17-18 April, 1993, p.14

the contract to sell the Rebecca fruit to Heemskerk had not stipulated a price and the shareholders found it very difficult to negotiate an acceptable price with the French. The Chairman of the Rebecca syndicate, Dr Don Boden, flew to France twice in an attempt to sort out the relationship with Jean Claude Rouzaud, but eventually wrote formally to Roederer saying that the 15 Rebecca shareholders were not happy with the arrangement and suggested that either they buy out the Heemskerk interest in Rebecca, or Roederer buy out the Rebecca shareholders. The French company wanted the vineyard but despite protracted negotiation, an agreed price could not be reached. The shareholders then sought a buyer on the mainland, but without success. Finally, Dr. Boden, himself a shareholder in Pipers Brook, suggested to Andrew Pirie that Pipers Brook may like to acquire Rebecca. A reasonable price was agreed with shareholders offered cash or Pipers Brook shares and the sale completed in August, 1993.¹⁸ Shortly after, Pipers Brook announced a share issue of 1.25 million shares at \$1.20 to finance expansion. This made Pipers Brook a public company, but not listed on the stock exchange.¹⁹

Taltarni had released their first wine from their Tasmanian vineyard in June, and in September unveiled their flagship wine, the 1991 Clover Hill, an all chardonnay sparkling wine, although pinot noir and pinot meunier would be part of all but one future Clover Hill blends²⁰. Launching the wine, Taltarni chief Dominique Portet announced the construction of a new winery and tasting rooms on the Lebrina site to begin immediately. With Jansz and Clover Hill, Tasmania now had two prominent brands of sparkling wine that would achieve national exposure and begin to consolidate the state's growing reputation as the best sparkling region in Australia.

In the 1993 Federal budget, the Treasurer, John Dawkins, decided to reward the export success of the Australian wine industry by increasing the wholesale sales tax on wine from 20% to 31%. As a percentage tax, rather than volumetric, the effect was bound to be more severe on the higher priced boutique end of the market and Tasmania would have been particularly severely affected. There was widespread opposition from the industry

¹⁸ Don Boden, *Oral History Recording No. 17* (Launceston: 2010).

¹⁹ The law allowed a public company to be unlisted as long as trading was discrete. Pipers Brook was not listed until 1998

²⁰ The 1992 Clover Hill was also 100% chardonnay

nationwide, with Tasmanian growers adding their voices²¹. After the tax hike was rejected in the Senate, a compromise deal was hammered out, with the tax increasing to 22% in 1993/4, 24% in 1994/5 and 26% in 1995/6. A three year cash grant program was introduced to compensate growers for the rise in wholesale tax, but cancelled on the election of a Liberal government in 1996. The future of wine tax after that date was to be advised by a major Industrial Commission Inquiry into the Australian wine industry, to be completed no later than June, 1995. The inquiry was begun in July, 1994, but there was to be considerable drama in the Tasmanian industry before that got under way.

The VAT Promotions sub-committee was immediately responsible for an increase in marketing activity, with VAT involved in the launch of the Spirit of Tasmania, a “Naturally Tasmanian” promotion at Daimaru in Melbourne and a Tasmanian Fine Wine Exhibition in Sydney, all in November, 1993. February 1994 saw the state’s major wine festival, the Tasmanian Wine Festival 1994, launched with an impressive 70 page booklet. The ambitious program included a Wine Festival Ball at George Town, waterfront winery tours on the Tamar, a four day Skyrace in Launceston, and winery concerts and exhibitions at Delamere, Pipers Brook, Marions, Rochemombe, Moorilla and Cliff House. It incorporated the Tasmanian Regional Wine Show with guest judges Tim Knappstein from the Barossa Valley and prominent German wine writer Dr Jens Priewe.

Coinciding with the Festival was the Son of Wine Flight, which brought to Australia 30 members of the English wine trade and a number of prominent wine journalists, including Oz Clarke and Charles Metcalfe. The group visited the Tamar Valley, Pipers Brook, the East Coast and the Coal River Valley in a whirlwind 48 hour tour. Although elements of the Festival were seen as successful, the overall industry reaction was disappointment and the poor response probably set back the prospects of a regular Tasmanian Wine Festival by some time.

The first Tasmanian wine industry casualty of the recession was Rochemombe at Pipers River. Bernard and Brigitte Rochaix were under cashflow stress, with the costs of a new state of the art winery and the departure of founding partner Alf Edgecombe,

²¹ This included a face to face meeting with Treasurer John Dawkins in Hobart in September, 1993.

compounded by severe frost damage which had dramatically reduced production in 1991 and 1993. In February, 1994, with the Westpac Bank seeking repayment of a \$300,000 loan, Rochecombe sought equity partners to help cover the loans and to install wind machines to minimize future frost damage, but the vineyard was placed into receivership later in the month. A plant and equipment auction was scheduled for April 19. The failure of a major vineyard such as Rochecombe had the potential to shake investor confidence- Bernard and Brigitte Rochaix were experienced vineyard operators who had invested \$3.5 million and 10 years work into developing the Pipers River vineyard, winery and restaurant. There was an outstanding debt of \$900,000 to Tasmanian Development and Resources, and the Rochaix expressed a hope that the TDR would buy the equipment at auction and lend further funds to allow the vineyard to reach full production in 1995. Just three days before the auction was due, Rochecombe announced that a company owned by local businessman Josef Chromy had purchased the debt owing to the Westpac Bank and that this would result in “the immediate removal of the Receivers and Managers and the cancellation of the auction.”²²

Josef Chromy was a Czechoslovakian refugee who built Blue Ribbon Meat Products into a Tasmanian business employing 540 people with an annual turnover of \$75 million. In 1993, he sold 70% of the company when it was floated on the Australian Stock Exchange, and this was his first business venture since his “retirement”. Many were surprised at Chromy taking on such a challenge, but he saw that the wine industry in Tasmania, like the meat industry before it, was undergoing rationalization. Many participants were undercapitalised and unable to achieve the economies of scale necessary to take full advantage of the potential for Tasmania’s premium cool climate fruit. Chromy believed that his 30 years experience in creating scale, quality, yield and developing new markets could contribute to the fledgling industry.

Chromy was granted an option to purchase Rochecombe before June 30, subject to a successful financial restructuring. The purchase went ahead and at the same time Chromy announced the simultaneous purchase of Heemskerk and Buchanan vineyards. Don

²² Rochecombe Vineyard, *Press Release- Receiver Removed from Rochecombe Vineyard* (Launceston: 1994).

Buchanan had been carrying heavy debt at high interest rates and had decided to move on. Roederer's interest in Tasmania had been soured by the clash with local shareholders and the failure to acquire the Rebecca vineyard. Mark Fesq was fully occupied by his Sydney business and keen to sell. Both parties were finding management of the Tasmanian vineyard difficult, and agreed to sell Heemskerk to Chromy.

At Rochecombe, frost again decimated the 1994 crop and Chromy had until September to install an effective frost control mechanism. He employed Graham Wiltshire to help him with the management of all three vineyards. Bernard Rochaix returned to Switzerland but Brigitte Rochaix stayed on as manager and winemaker for the 1994 vintage but parted company with Chromy and returned to Switzerland in December. Understandably, they were very bitter about the Tasmanian experience and could not understand why banks and the State Government were not prepared to support them after they had invested more the \$3 million in the state. They believed that their experience would sour any potential international investor's view of Tasmania.²³

In retrospect, 1993 was a turning point for the Tasmanian wine industry. This was a young developing industry, with inherent cashflow problems from the nature of the business and the insecurity of dependence on the weather in a marginal region. Most vineyards were undercapitalized and under financial pressure in a recession economy with high interest rates. If Rochecombe had been grubbed out, rather than finding a buyer to maintain it as a going concern, it may well have had severe repercussions on the confidence of the industry and more importantly, on the financial institutions supporting it. The Chromy investment was the first major corporate entry into the industry and injected much needed capital at the right time.

Andrew Pirie recalls that even Pipers Brook had been feeling the strain as he celebrated the vineyard's 20th birthday. With 20 years behind him, he reflected that, when he looked back on his PhD thesis he had predicted that pinot noir, chardonnay and riesling would be the most successful varieties, but that had not stopped him planting a lot of cabernet. He felt that the jury was still out on pinot noir. Areas like the Yarra Valley and the Adelaide

²³ Bernard & Brigitte Rochaix, *Press Release* (Launceston: 1994). 22 December, 1994

Hills were producing pinots with lots of backbone and power, but Tasmania's strengths were perfume and elegance. He felt that good viticulture could put more backbone into Tasmanian pinots, but there was no way that mainland wines could acquire the perfume of the Tasmanian wines.²⁴

Pipers Brook announced two other major developments later that year. The recently acquired Rebecca vineyard at Rosevears would revert to its original property name of Strathlyn and would be home to the Strathlyn Wine Centre. This ambitious project was in the hands of Andrew's wife Sabrina, who would supervise the development of the restaurant, gallery and sales area, and would then manage it. The second development was the change of name for Pirie's "second label" from the Tasmanian Wine Company to Ninth Island, a brand which has since become a market leader for Tasmania throughout Australia and in many international markets. The new label got a high profile boost when the 1994 Ninth Island Chardonnay was named White Wine of the Year from more than 7000 entries at the UK International Wine Challenge in September, 1995. Oddly enough, Andrew Pirie recalls that the win had little effect on UK sales, but a dramatic impact on Tasmanian sales and also provided access into markets like Finland where it has been a long term success.²⁵ Ninth Island quickly became Tasmania's best selling brand nationally, and remains so.

The Vineyards Association of Tasmania had been aware of a need for local viticultural training for some time and had been in ongoing discussions with Tim Barbour, the Head of Horticulture at the Launceston Institute of TAFE. In May, 1994, the College introduced Level 1 and 2 of the nationally accredited modules in viticulture with 23 students in Launceston and 15 in Hobart. The College had also come to an agreement with the Lilydale District High School to develop a training vineyard on the school farm. The course co-ordinator was Mark Brewer, who had moved to Tasmania in 1986 as vineyard manager for Pipers Brook. In 1990, at the age of 32, he was diagnosed with a rare heart condition. Eventually he was told that he would need a heart transplant, and took the decision to leave Pipers Brook for the less physically demanding role setting up

²⁴ Tony Walker, "Pirie Looks at Cellar Life Beyond 20," *Sunday Examiner*. 13 February, 1994 p.24

²⁵ Andrew Pirie, *Oral History Recording No. 11* (Launceston: 2010).

the viticultural training for TAFE, including the establishment of the Lilydale school vineyard. Mark Brewer still runs those courses, with the assistance of Chris King in the north and Chris Harrington in the south, and calculates that at least 25 of his students have gone on to establish vineyards in Tasmania, many of them using him as a consultant for the exercise.²⁶ In addition many more viticulture graduates are working in the industry as vineyard managers or cellar hands. There is no doubt that the TAFE training has played a major part in lifting the general standard of viticulture throughout the state.

The VAT had another win in 1994 with the Tasmanian Government finally agreeing to abolish licence fees for vineyards. Over the past five years, growers had been paying the fees which were then rebated by the Government. The abolition of licence fees finally brought Tasmania into line with all other states.

A good deal of the VAT's time and energy this year went into preparing a submission to the Industrial Commission's national wine industry enquiry²⁷. The inquiry had been set up as a result of the backlash to the proposed sales tax rises on wine, and was convened in July, 1994. The committee was led by Industrial Commission head Bill Scales as Chairman, with Brian Croser as industry representative and Professor John Freebairn of Monash University. The sales tax had already risen to 26% and the Government had proposed a further rise to 31%. Both the VAT and the Tasmanian Government²⁸ made formal submissions to the inquiry arguing against a rise in the wholesale tax and for a move to volumetric taxation which did not penalize Tasmania's premium product.

The VAT Executive Officer Paddy Baker resigned due to ill health and Graeme Allen moved into the position midway through the year. Andrew Hood continued as President, with Greg O'Keefe elected Chairman of the Promotions Group. Ben Wagner moved from his role as viticultural officer for the Department of Primary Industry to a position with Tasmania Development and Resources. After a gap of more than six months, the position

²⁶ Mark Brewer, *Oral History Recording No. 13* (Launceston: 2010).

²⁷ Vineyards Association of Tasmania, *Submission to the Inquiry into the Wine Grape and Wine Industry* (Launceston: 1994).

²⁸ Tasmanian State Government, *Tasmanian Government Submission to the Inquiry into the Wine Grape and Wine Industry* (Hobart: 1994).

was filled by Duncan Farquhar. Farquhar had an Agricultural Science degree and a background in the essential oils and perfumery industries.

Pipers Brook had completed their Strathlyn Wine Centre development at Rosevears and opened it in December, 1994. The new centre, designed and managed by Sabrina Pirie, included a restaurant with indoor and outdoor seating for 100 people, a tasting room and a wine gallery, selling a variety of wine-related products. The restaurant, with chef Daniel Alps at the helm was to become iconic in the state. At the same ceremony, the Tamar Valley Wine Route was launched, with 14 vineyards participating in a new tourist brochure and specially designed road signage. This was the first wine route in Tasmania and became one of the industry's most successful promotional tools.

One of the more bizarre events of 1994 was a legal threat from the French to Stuart Bryce's La Provence vineyard. Solicitors acting for the French National Institute of Appellations of Origin advised Bryce to cease using the name La Provence on the grounds that he was implying that the wine was either produced in France or the same as that produced in Cote de Provence. The claim was so laughable that Bryce originally decided to fight the case and succeeded in having the matter transferred to Hobart and forcing the French to lodge a \$100,000 surety as the organization had no presence in Australia. Although winning the case in the Federal Court in 1996, on the grounds that he was not aware that the label may be deceptive, ultimately Bryce found 2 years of court proceedings and the prospect of further action too stressful and decided to change the name from La Provence to Providence. He did however win the ultimate victory when all costs in the case were awarded against the French.²⁹ Nevertheless, Tasmania lost the name of its first vineyard of the modern era.

The year was to close with another winery under threat, this time in the south of the state.

Moorilla Estate had been expanding with the purchase of St Matthias in the Tamar Valley and the construction of a new wine centre and jetty. The extra fruit from St Matthias also necessitated enlargement of the winery. Despite praise for the wines³⁰, sales had been

²⁹ Bryce, *Oral History Recording No. 2*.

³⁰ Moorilla was Most Successful Exhibitor at the Tasmanian Wine Show in 1993, 1994 and 1995.

limited by the company's over-reliance on pinot noir, before this variety had general market acceptance. Six partners had been brought into the business to inject some further capital. In November, the vineyard had fallen behind in its payments on a \$1.5 million loan from the Trust Bank and an \$800,000 loan from the Commonwealth Development Bank. The Trust Bank was threatening action. As the deadline approached, Julian Alcorso reluctantly approached his mother, Diana Schlunk, who had remarried and lived in Sydney, suggesting she invest as a straight business proposition. Julian Alcorso's recollection is that three weeks later he received a letter from the Commonwealth Development Bank thanking him for discharging the mortgage- he was surprised to find that his mother, with her husband Christian Schlunk, had bought out the \$800,000 mortgage for \$200,000³¹ and now wanted to buy out the other partners. Julian continued to operate as winemaker for the business, but it was to be an uneasy working relationship.³²

Tamar Valley Wines owner Joe Chromy had bought a 100 hectare property at Kayena from the Hewitt family for vineyard development, and employed international viticulturist Richard Smart to work on the design and planting. The 21 hectares planted in 1995 introduced the Scott Henry trellising method to Tasmania. To manage the Tamar Valley Wines group of vineyards, Chromy appointed Steve Goodwin, formerly the general manager and winemaker at Baileys of Glenrowan, as general manager, and Gary Ford as winemaker. Goodwin had an existing connection with Tasmania, having judged at the Hobart Wine Show for a dozen years. At Heemskerk, eight hectares of cabernet sauvignon was removed and replanted to pinot noir and chardonnay. At Rochemombe the half million dollar frost protection system, which delivers one million litres per hour through 675 sprinkler heads, was already paying its way, with three potentially harmful frosts averted.

In August, Andrew Pirie, who had just replaced Andrew Hood as president of the Vineyards Association of Tasmania, announced that 1995 had set new records for the Tasmanian industry, with yields topping 2000 tonnes for the first time, almost double the

³¹ The CDB had been ready to write off the debt.

³² Alcorso, *Oral History Recording No. 41*.

1994 crop and worth an estimated \$13.5 million to the state. The VAT found itself involved in a battle between Purity supermarkets, a subsidiary of Woolworths, and the hotel lobby regarding the sale of liquor in supermarkets, which was already permitted in other states. Purity chief Michael Kent chose to use Tasmanian wine as a beachhead in the battle, seeking a licence to sell Tasmanian wines only in their supermarkets. The VAT wisely decided to remain neutral in the conflict and the Government eventually legislated to prevent the licence being granted, just five days before the licence hearing. Michael Kent commented “will the last person to leave Tasmania please turn off the lights.....it makes us the laughing stock of Australia.”³³

The uneasy relationship between Julian Alcorso and his mother Diana Schlunk at Moorilla came to a head in June, when Julian and his wife Keryn Nylander returned from a wine fair in Brisbane. Newspapers at the time reported that they were locked out of the vineyard and winery on their return, but Julian Alcorso’s recollection is slightly different. He remembers returning from Brisbane to the winery and receiving a call from a lawyer acting for his mother, informing him that they were foreclosing on the second mortgage they had bought from the Commonwealth Development Bank and this would involve evicting his father, Claudio, from his house on the estate. Although Julian’s relationship with his father was not warm, he was appalled at this treatment which he saw as a vindictive act on the part of his mother, and faxed a letter of resignation to the lawyer. Within 20 minutes there were security guards on the property, they were locked out and given two weeks to leave. He was paid out for his shares in the business and he and Keryn left the country, leaving Diana and Christian Schlunk the sole owners of Moorilla.

Within three months, the business was in receivership and in the hands of the Trust Bank.

The receiver, Paul Cook, was hopeful of selling the estate as a going concern, but the two most likely buyers, Joe Chromy and Andrew Pirie, said they had no immediate interest in either the St Matthias or the southern vineyards. Despite Mrs Schlunk’s description of the business as a “lost cause”, the receiver reported that it was trading profitably and it attracted 50 expressions of interest from prospective buyers. In November, the receivers

³³ *The Examiner*. 21 September, 1995 p.5

announced that the business had been sold to a “Tasmanian consortium” for a reported \$1.2 million. Tim Goddard, who had been working in the wine industry in Western Australia and was a previous manager of Hobart’s Aberfeldy Cellars, was brought in as General Manager, and the buyers were eventually revealed as a Hobart based gambling syndicate led by David Walsh.

The saga was not quite over. Claudio Alcorso, who had virtually lost everything in the collapse of Moorilla, was now threatened with eviction, as the sale of the business had not covered the total debt. Alcorso vowed to fight the eviction and was backed by an open letter to the Trust Bank published in the Mercury, organized by sculptor Stephen Walker and carrying the signatures of 250 Tasmanians.³⁴ The day before the matter was due to be heard in the Supreme Court, an agreement was reached with the new owners to lease the Round House on the property, formerly occupied by Julian Alcorso and his family, to Claudio and his wife. The original house designed by Roy Grounds and built for them at Moorilla, was to become a museum of antiquities.

February of 1996 saw the first release of two important Tasmanian wines. The 1995 *Wellington Sweet Riesling* was an attempt by Andrew Hood to duplicate the “ice wine” of Europe. The riesling juice is repeatedly frozen and the water discarded, concentrating the alcohol and the flavours before fermentation. The intense dessert wine, later labelled as “*Iced Riesling*” has been a commercial success and production has gradually been increased. The second significant release was the first sparkling wine from the Lake Barrington vineyard in the north west, which Maree Taylor named *Alexandra*, the name of the daughter born just a week after the sudden death of her husband Roger in 1994. *Alexandra*, made by Steve Lubiana at Granton, won two trophies in its first three vintages, and has consistently been in the top rank of Tasmanian sparkling wines ever since.

The new owners of Moorilla had found a talented young winemaker in Jason Winter, a New Zealander who also had experience in France and South Australia. He arrived in Tasmania ready for the 1996 vintage, and, as a newcomer to the state, was visiting the

³⁴ *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 6 December, 1995

Broad Arrow Café at the Port Arthur historic site on April 28. He was one of 35 people killed by Martin Bryant on that infamous day, appropriately remembered as the Port Arthur Massacre. Local producers quickly joined forces to initiate the Jason Winter Memorial Appeal, a trust fund set up to support his wife Jo and young son Mitchell.

French winemaker Alain Rousseau, who had been working with Peter Althaus at Stoney Vineyard, took over mid-vintage as Moorilla winemaker.

1996 produced the coldest and wettest summer on record, with most vineyards picking two to four weeks later than usual and a great deal of fruit not reaching full ripeness and going to sparkling wine. After the bumper 1995 vintage it was a salutary reminder that Tasmanians were operating in a marginal and unpredictable climate. Tasmania seemed to be slipping into a pattern of reversing national trends, with a good vintage in 1995, a generally bad year on the mainland, and poor in 1996, a boom year in other states.

In June, 1996, Sydney hosted the first national wine event, Wine Australia '96. 25,000 people flocked to the Darling Harbour Exhibition Centre over four days to work their way through 2,500 wines from 273 Australian vineyards. Most states had exhibits made up of individual wineries, but Tasmania took a different approach, with the 10 exhibitors presenting a collaborative stand arranged by variety, so that visitors could taste a lineup of Tasmanian pinots, or chardonnays, or sparkling wines. This varietal approach was particularly attractive to trade tasters who could quickly become familiar with the cool climate styles being produced in Tasmania.

In the same month the industry released *Australian Wine Industry- Strategy 2025*, a strategic plan largely driven by the Winemakers' Federation of Australia and setting long term goals for Australian wine. Its export projections were generally regarded as wildly optimistic at the time, but were in fact all exceeded over the next five years. The vision was ambitious:

The vision is that by the year 2025 , the Australian wine industry will achieve \$4.5 billion in annual sales by being the world's most influential

*and profitable supplier of branded wines, pioneering wine as a universal first choice lifestyle beverage.*³⁵

The strategy, which aimed to position Australia as “well represented in the elite category of the world’s best wines” was a departure from the “cheap and cheerful” image of Australian wine in the UK, and well suited to Tasmania which would be aiming a premium product at niche markets. In November, the Vineyards Association of Tasmania released its own Strategy Tasmania³⁶, a strategic plan for the Tasmanian industry.

In August, Purity Supermarkets chief Michael Kent, who had fought a long, bitter and ultimately unsuccessful battle to secure liquor licences for supermarkets, announced a major move into retail liquor marketing with the purchase of the Aberfeldy Hotel in Hobart, the Gateway Hotel in Devonport, the Regent Hotel and Grape Vine bottle shop in Burnie and the wholesale company, Tasmanian Fine Wines. All would trade under the Cheaper Liquor Company banner. This move by the Woolworths-owned company mirrored the push into liquor retailing by that major supermarket chain in other states.

Coles, who had sold their Tasmanian Liquorland outlets when they failed to secure single bottle sales for their wholesale licences, were also aggressively expanding on the mainland and the two supermarket chains would dominate Australian liquor marketing for the next 15 years.

In September 1996, Graeme Allen resigned as Executive Officer for VAT to become General Manager of Pipers Brook, a position he held until the takeover by Kreglinger in 2001. Malcolm McDonald was appointed as new VAT Executive Officer, but his appointment was brief and he was replaced by Sheree McKinley in June the following year.

The October and December, 1996 issues of the influential Winewise magazine were devoted to Tasmania. Winewise writers had visited Tasmania in July and wrote a comprehensive description of all major Tasmanian vineyards with reviews of their wines.

³⁵ Winemakers' Federation of Australia, *Strategy 2025* (Adelaide: Australian Wine Foundation, 1996).

³⁶ Vineyards Association of Tasmania, "Strategy Tasmania- Strategic Plan for the Tasmanian Wine Industry," (1996).

An editorial predicted a great future for Cuvee Tasmania, acknowledging the potential for Tasmania to lead the way in producing great Australian sparkling wine.³⁷

In August, 1996 Pipers Brook had issued a share offer to raise \$2 million for the expansion of the winery and vineyards. The offer was considerably oversubscribed, and in March of the following year, Andrew and Sabrina Pirie invited the Premier, Tony Rundle, to open the expanded winery, with new cellars, bottling hall and an outdoor amphitheatre for vineyard concerts. The extensions, designed by the original architect, Robert Morris-Nunn, represented a further investment of \$1.7 million in the wine estate.

Later in the year, Pirie began substantial new plantings in the Pipers Brook area, with the development of the Bird, Leura and Timperon (formerly Pellion) vineyards, and on the West Tamar at the Strathlyn vineyard. A new café and tasting room were opened in December, 1997. In the same month, Pipers Brook raised another \$4.1 million with a share issue aimed at vineyard expansion

In January, 1997, Russell Cook had replaced Steve Goodwin as General Manager of Tamar Valley Wines. Cook, who had played a significant role in the development of the Margaret River region in Western Australia, changed the name to the Heemskerk Wine Group and set about repositioning the brands. The *Fluyt*³⁸ brand was introduced as fruit-driven ready-to-drink wines priced under \$20, with an *R.V.*³⁹ sparkling wine in the same range. Vineyards were expanded and a major program of trellis modification converted vines to the Scott Henry system. The Rochemcombe winery was enlarged to handle 1000 tonnes in a vintage and a new European sparkling wine bottling plant was installed for the 1998 vintage.

At Moorilla, General Manager Tim Goddard was working hard to rebuild market confidence in the slightly tarnished Moorilla image, with new, cleaner labelling, a change of distributors, the introduction of a premium *Moorilla Reserve* label and the

³⁷ "Tasmanian Issue," *Winewise* 12, no. 6 (1996). P.2

³⁸ Fluyt was another nautical name- a class of Dutch ships in the days of Tasman

³⁹ For Rochemcombe Vineyard

development of the *St Matthias* label as an early drinking style, including a *St M* sparkling wine.

One change not welcomed by Tasmanian vignerons was a further complication in the taxation system. State licence fees were found to be invalid by the High Court so the Commonwealth decided to collect the fee as an additional sales tax and return it to the states. This increased the sales tax on wine from 26% to 41%. However, the Tasmanian Government had made cellar door and mail order sales exempt from the licence fee, and for their direct retail sales, vineyards paid sales tax on only half the sale price. As I wrote at the time in the *Sunday Examiner*:

*it seems likely that the State Government will continue to honour this commitment, leading to the truly Monty Pythonesque situation of vineyards sending a monthly cheque to Canberra, who will then send it to the Tasmanian treasury, who will then return it to the people who sent it in the first place.*⁴⁰

There was an even more serious implication for smaller vineyards. Previously there had been a \$10,000 threshold on sales tax- at 26% this meant that a vineyard could sell \$38,000 worth of wine without exceeding the threshold. At 41%, that figure reduced to \$26,000, so many small cellar door operations would find themselves liable for sales tax for the first time. This was all bad news for growers, made worse by the bureaucratic bookwork necessary to keep it all in order. Australia had the unwelcome distinction of paying more tax on a bottle of wine than any other country in the world.

Tasmanian pinot noir appeared now to be well established as the state's flagship variety, with Peter and Ruth Althaus' *Domaine A Pinot Noir* given the first five gold star rating ever for an Australian pinot in Robin Bradley's highly respected Australian and New Zealand Wine Vintages. In the Bradley rating system, five gold stars translated as "among the great wines of the world". In the same month Dr Michael Beamish's 1995 Notley Gorge Pinot Noir, made by Andrew Hood, took the top gold medal at the Royal Melbourne Show. At the 1997 Royal Hobart Wine, a Tasmanian wine won the Qantas

⁴⁰ Tony Walker, *Sunday Examiner* (Launceston). 17, August, 1997, p.32

Trophy for Best Pinot Noir for the fourth year in a row⁴¹. In the 1997 vintage, pinot noir accounted for 559 tonnes of the 1448 tonnes produced in a poor season. Of course Tasmanian Wine Show Chairman of Judges James Halliday continued to muddy the waters by heaping praise on Tasmanian cabernets at the 1997 show, and awarding the 1995 Notley Gorge Cabernet Merlot his Chairman's Trophy.

The chardonnay variety, and Tasmanian wine in general, got a lift from the announcement that the 1995 Heemskerk chardonnay had won *Winestate* magazine's Chardonnay of the Year award, from 841 Australian and New Zealand chardonnays tasted over the last 12 months. In an all round performance, the Clover Hill won the Sparkling Wine of the Year award in the Penguin Good Australian Wine Guide and Jansz received a similar five star rating. And, as the icing on the cake, the 1996 Dalrymple sauvignon blanc was top wine in an Australia-wide tasting of the variety by the *Advertiser* newspaper in Adelaide. Tasmania was beginning to be taken seriously nationally, with the Heemskerk and Pipers Brook vineyards now ranking in Australia's 100 biggest producers.

Hazel Murphy, the diminutive dynamo who had done so much to promote Australian wine in Europe, visited Tasmania with a U.K. trade group in November, and had some good advice for prospective Tasmanian exporters. Certainly Tasmania must maintain quality, establish a regional identity and promote co-operatively, but she believed the most effective way to promote Tasmanian wine was to get people to come here, concluding "you will have made a customer for life"⁴².

Released for Christmas 1997 was an important review of Tasmanian wine in book form- Phil Laing's *Tasmanian Wines*. Laing was uniquely equipped to write the first comprehensive book on Tasmanian wine having had a long association with the industry and knowing every producer in the state personally. He was also a formidable palate, a member of many successful option teams for Tasmania, and provided expert tasting notes for the wines of each vineyard. Thoroughly researched and extremely user friendly, the

⁴¹ Gavin Scott's 1995 Silkwood Pinot Noir

⁴² Walker, *Sunday Examiner*. 23 November, 1997 p.30

book was enlivened by the wonderful vinous illustrations of Tasmanian artist Tom Samek, and went on to a further two editions.

1998 began with the wine industry again making the front pages of local newspapers. As Wendy Matthews was performing at the annual Pipers Brook concert and open day, Andrew Pirie dropped a bombshell- Pipers Brook had acquired the Heemskerk group from Joe Chromy at a reported \$10 million. The purchase included the Heemskerk, Rochemombe and Loira vineyards, and of course the prestige Jansz sparkling label. Joe Chromy retained the Kayena vineyard, with an arrangement that the fruit would go to Pipers Brook. Pirie also announced that Pipers Brook Vineyard Ltd would list on the Australian Stock Exchange by June. Pipers Brook Chairman, John Hasker, said the purchase was driven by historically low stock levels at Pipers Brook which had been exacerbated both by growing exports to the UK and the enormous success of the Ninth Island label, which was struggling to maintain supply to restaurants.⁴³ The acquisition immediately doubled Pipers Brook's access to bearing vineyards, taking that to 133 hectares, and took total vineyard area to just under 200 hectares.

The Jansz label did not stay with Pipers Brook long. In April, Pirie announced the sale of Jansz to Samuel Smith and Sons, owners of Yalumba. The \$2 million purchase included 250,000 bottles of maturing Jansz wine. The deal did not include the Jansz vineyard but offered the security of a five year grape supply while Samuel Smith established their own 20 hectare vineyard. Samuel Smith director Robert Hill Smith said that the company intended to produce the wine at Rochemombe, using their own winemaker, Geoff Linton.

Of course, Pirie had stocks of his own, as yet unnamed 1995 sparkling wine maturing in his cellars.

Meanwhile, Joe Chromy still had the Kayena vineyard producing fruit, but no winery or winemaker. Julian Alcorso had returned to Tasmania in 1996 and had been working for Purity establishing their wholesale liquor business in Hobart. Chromy approached him, and asked him what he would need to vinify the 20 or 30 tonnes predicted to come from

⁴³ *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 17 February, 1998 p.5

the vineyard in the 1998 vintage. Chromy then approached Bert Sundstrup at Dalrymple who has excess capacity in his winery and arranged to share the winery for one year. The first Tamar Ridge wines were made there, and this began a successful partnership between Chromy and Alcorso which was to create a new wine estate, Tamar Ridge Wines.

The predicted public listing of Pipers Brook went forward in May, with the release of a prospectus offering a non-renounceable rights issue of 1,889,590 shares at \$1.90 to the company's 926 existing shareholders, and a further placement of 900,000 shares at \$1.90. The shares were currently selling between \$2.20 and \$2.40. This was expected to raise \$5.25 million and would precede the expected listing of the company on the Australian Stock Exchange on July 2. Altogether about 12.24 million shares were on issue when the stock listed on July 2, and shareholders made an immediate profit with the shares trading at \$2.45.

1998 was a great vintage with the Tasmanian yield topping 3000 tonnes for the first time, more than double the disappointing 1997, and yield per hectare reaching a respectable seven tonnes. This was to be the first of a series of four very good years with consistent yields, which gave the expanding industry breathing space to consolidate.

In January 1999, the wine industry hit the front pages again, but this time it was no cause for celebration- thieves had broken in to the Pipers Brook winery, ransacked offices, stolen cash and opened the release valves on eight vats of wine, sending some 100,000 litres down the drain. The lost wine was estimated to have a retail value between three and four million dollars. While the wine was insured it would leave Pipers Brook down in the quantity it needed to maintain continuity to markets.

Apart from this act of senseless vandalism, the industry was looking buoyant.

Encouraged by the bountiful 1998 vintage, investment was in the air. Pipers Brook was planting an extensive vineyard above the road at Strathlyn, Moorilla was doubling the size of the St Matthias vineyard, and Notley Gorge owner, Dr Michael Beamish was developing a major vineyard, winery, restaurant and wine centre at Rosevears, importing talented young winemaker Jim Chatto from the Hunter Valley. Down at Kayena, Joe

Chromy was expanding what he confusingly called the Rebecca vineyard⁴⁴ to 50 hectares and building a major winery to be ready for Julian Alcorso to process the '99 vintage. At Relbia, a consortium led by abalone diver Steve Devereaux, was planting Old Stornaway, a 60 hectare vineyard, with the fruit contracted to Pipers Brook and BRL Hardy.

In the south, Gerald Ellis of Meadowbank in the Derwent Valley announced plans for a major new vineyard and wine centre at Cambridge, and on the East coast, Brian Franklin opened his new waterfront Apsley Gorge winery at Bicheno, with plans for a waterfront café and tasting rooms. The Vineyards Association of Tasmania estimated capital expenditure on new vineyard development at \$6.45 million for 1999, and more than \$10 million for the two years '98 and '99, as more than 200 additional hectares were planted around then state.

In February, Andrew Pirie unveiled the vineyard's first sparkling wine, destined to become, for the time being at least, Australia's most expensive sparkler. The wine-named simply *Pirie*, was launched with the usual Pipers Brook style at a black tie dinner, with each guest able to cork their own bottle of *Pirie*, which was then signed by the winemaker. The south and east sloping vineyards at Pipers Brook were now earmarked for sparkling wine, producing fruit with high retained acidity but with full flavour ripeness. The '95 Pirie was well received by the wine press, but the ultimate accolade came from British writer Tom Stevenson, an acknowledged Champagne expert, who described the wine as "somewhere between a vintage Champagne and a deluxe cuvee".

The slightly immodest idea of naming a wine after yourself had good Tasmanian precedent, with Steve Lubiana making his *Lubiana* sparkling and Claude Radenti at Freycinet producing *Radenti*. The lineup of Tasmanian sparkling wines was becoming impressive, with premium sparklers now being made by Elsewhere, Moorilla, Delamere, Fishburn and O'Keefe, Iron Pot Bay, Lake Barrington (Alexandra), Kinvarra, Touchwood and Rosevears Estate. Outside the state, Domaine Chandon had released a Tasmanian Cuvee and the BRL Hardy flagship sparkler *Arras* was becoming progressively more Tasmanian as fruit became available. There was an anxious moment

⁴⁴ Rebecca had been the previous name for Strathlyn

when the first Jansz NV produced by Yalumba contained only 27% Tasmanian fruit, despite the “Jansz Tasmania” label, but this was a result of the vandalism at Pipers Brook where a good deal of the wine destined for Jansz went down the drain, and the wine soon reverted to 100% Tasmanian.

Joe Chromy had by now invested more than \$7 million dollars in his Kayena venture and the new winery processed 200 tonnes of fruit in the 1999 vintage. The wines were to be marketed as Tamar Ridge, with an early drinking Devil’s Corner label and a super premium range to be released as Josef Chromy Selection. The business plan saw the vineyard producing 30,000 cases by 2005.

The ambitious Rosevears Estate project had the winery up and running for the ’99 vintage, with winemaker Jim Chatto processing fruit from the Glengarry, Notley Gorge and the recently purchased Cliff House vineyards. The 250 seat restaurant and function centre was opened in November. The premium range of wines would carry the Rosevears Estate label, with the earlier drinking style wines labeled Notley Gorge.

Another important development in 1999 was the foundation of the Tasmanian Pinot Noir Group, initiated by Graham Wiltshire, with the encouragement of Duncan Farquhar. Wiltshire, a confirmed pinophile, believed that it was the state’s most important and most challenging variety. The group was, in Wiltshire’s words “apolitical, self-funded, self elected, sans constitution, rules or office bearers”⁴⁵. Its only qualification for membership was the “capacity and willingness to contribute”. Its prime purpose was the improvement of pinot noir in Tasmania. Membership started at 12 and within 18 months had grown to 19, representing all pinot regions in Tasmania. An early initiative was a benchmarking program, with 25 growers attending a two day introduction to benchmarking and canopy management at Pipers Brook, Holm Oak and Tamar Ridge. Seventeen participants then took part in 12 benchmarking meetings, looking at the world of pinot noir, with wines from Burgundy, Oregon, New Zealand, mainland Australia and Tasmania. The group’s annual three day forums, with Wiltshire as co-ordinator and Tony Scherer from Frogmore Creek as chairman, became a highlight in the wine year and brought many distinguished

⁴⁵ *Vineyards Association of Tasmania Newsletter*. September, 2000, p.2

pinot growers and experts to Tasmania to share their knowledge and experience. There is no doubt that the TPNG has made a major contribution to the quality of the pinot noir being produced in Tasmania.

With all the good news as the decade drew to a close, the usual black cloud of taxation continued to hang over the industry, with all states united in fighting the WET or Wine Equalisation Tax. The Federal Government planned to bring in a consumption tax, the 10% GST, on July 1, 2000. Good news for the wine industry you would think, with a 10% GST replacing the former 41% sales tax. Not so- the Government introduced the Wine Equalisation Tax, and set it at 29%, meaning an effective rise in sales tax on wine from 41% to 43%. Any grower coming into the industry before 1984, had seen the sales tax on wine increase from zero to 43% in 16 years. The fight against this tax, which, in its original form would have removed the tax concessions on cellar door and mail order sales, took up much of the time and energy of the Vineyards Association of Tasmania, and particularly the convenor of their tax fighting committee, Stuart Bryce of Providence vineyard, who worked tirelessly to minimize the effect on Tasmanian vineyards⁴⁶. It was a contentious issue which caused dissent and a number of resignations from VAT as the debate raged on over two years, with many members disagreeing with the approach taken by the Winemakers' Federation of Australia. The WFA approach was to accept the WET and seek concessions, while VAT and small grower groups in other states, believed the industry should be united in pushing for a GST only tax regime. A further longstanding issue was the question of the mode of taxation, volumetric or *ad valorem*⁴⁷. As a state of small growers producing high value wines, the volumetric system would clearly be the preferred method for Tasmanian vineyards and many VAT members felt strongly that their association should support that position. Looking back 10 years later, VAT President Stuart Bryce believed that the defection of important growers from VAT at that time was the beginning of the end for VAT, as the association could no longer claim to be fully representative of the Tasmanian industry in its dealings with Government and Government bodies.⁴⁸ The VAT tax committee continued to work with the WFA and

⁴⁶ Bryce became President of VAT when Andrew Pirie resigned in June, 1999

⁴⁷ The traditional wine taxation in Australia was by percentage of the wine's sale price or value.

⁴⁸ *Vineyards Association of Tasmania Newsletter*. January, 2007, p.1

gradually, small concessions were dragged out of the Federal Government until a position was reached which provided full exemption from the 29% WET for wineries selling less than \$300,000 wholesale value. Wineries selling between \$300,000 and \$580,000 would continue to be entitled to the existing 15% rebate. All wholesale sales would be subject to the full GST plus WET tax, effectively increasing the price of wine to restaurant or retailers by 4%. Australia was still the highest taxed wine producing country in the world.

Despite this additional weight in the saddlebags, the industry was looking healthy. It had survived the financial pressures of a decade of high interest rates and a two year recession, with the damage minimized by capital injections from Joe Chromy in the north and David Walsh in the south. Expansion in Tasmania was steady, but well within the limits of market demand. On the mainland however, trouble was brewing. Investment was pouring in and the rate of expansion was becoming unsustainable- from an additional 3000 hectares a year planted in the early 90s, new vineyard establishment had grown to 16,000 hectares a year by 1998⁴⁹. Exports were still strong, with the United States now beginning to mirror the UK export boom of the 80s. In fact the rate of national export growth in 1999/2000 was the highest on record- 36.4% to achieve revenue of \$A1.35 billion on the sale of 287.6 million litres. 50 million litres went to the United States, an increase of 35% on the previous year.⁵⁰ Nevertheless the prospect of a “wine glut” loomed. As many of the new vineyards were in cooler climate areas, this increasingly competitive market had the potential to destabilise Tasmanian markets moving into the next decade. This effect would be magnified greatly were export growth to falter.

Certainly export was becoming a higher priority for Tasmanian vineyards, led again by Pipers Brook, which ended the decade on a high note by winning the Prime Minister’s Australian Exporter of the Year award. Andrew Pirie said that Pipers Brook was aiming to build exports to 40% of total sales and urged other Tasmanian vineyards to look for international markets. Pirie argued that, as only 6% of Australian wine consumers purchased wines priced over \$20, the global market would be needed to absorb Tasmania’s growing production of premium table wines. The UK export push would be

⁴⁹ Faith, *Australia's Liquid Gold*. P.235

⁵⁰ *Vineyards Association of Tasmania Newsletter*. September, 2000

aided early in 2000 by the Son of Wine Flight 2000 which brought 57 UK wine trade representatives and wine journalists to Tasmania.

CHAPTER 10

COMING OF AGE

The new millennium began on a tide of optimism in the Tasmanian wine industry. The state was heading for its third consecutive good vintage and its wines were earning increasing recognition and praise. The coming decade was to triple the area under vines on the island.

Those recent good years were reflected in the results at the Tasmanian Wines Show in January where riesling and pinot noir again shone. A class of 26 1999 rieslings returned 13 medals, four of them gold, with the judges' comments "a very strong class with marvellous depth of fruit flavour and complexity", and "quite Germanic in style."¹ The judges, James Halliday, Huon Hooke and US winemaker Nick Goldschmidt, were even more impressed with the pinots, writing "a truly great class and a great privilege to judge. World class pinot noir is difficult to find; it requires great fruit from the vineyard and skill and sensitivity in the winery."²

28 of the 44 wines won medals, with eight gold, a strike rate which Halliday described as the best of any show in Australia.

That Tasmania could make great wines was now beyond dispute. Selling them was, however, another matter. Tasmania's modest 500 hectares of vines was just a drop in the national bucket, where plantings had trebled in little more than a decade, now reaching 150,000 hectares.³ While per capita wine consumption in Australia was still increasing steadily, it was clear that the projected volumes would rely heavily on the continuing growth of export markets. In this respect there were many factors beyond Australia's control, notably the international exchange rate and growing competition from low cost production countries.

¹ *Tasmanian Wines Show Catalogue 2000*, (Launceston: Tasmanian Wine Show Society, 2000). P.3

² *Ibid.* p.12

³ ———, *Australia's Liquid Gold*. P.235

The 2000 Tasmanian vintage did turn out to be right up there with '98 and '99, with 507 hectares producing 3263 tonnes of good quality fruit. The state's winegrapes continued to be in demand for premium sparkling wine base and good pinot noir and chardonnay was attracting in excess of \$2,500 per tonne. Not trusting these benign vintages to last forever, Andrew Pirie announced that Pipers Brook was seeking interstate expansion, both to spread the risk of poor vintages and to add shiraz and cabernet sauvignon to the company's portfolio. Pipers Brook also announced that it had sold the *Heemskerk* label, acquired in the purchase from Joe Chromy, to Fosters for use as an in house brand for their Cellarmasters wine club.⁴ The company also launched a third label, *Wavecrest*, as a lower priced early drinking style specifically for the Tasmanian market. The company's sparkling wine, *Pirie*, boosted Tasmania's stocks in Europe when *Pirie '96* was named the Wine of the Week by London's mass circulation Daily Mail, describing it as the best sparkling wine made outside France.

On July 1, the Premier, Jim Bacon, opened the Meadowbank Estate at Cambridge, a significant vote of confidence in the future of the industry by Derwent Valley vigneron Gerald Ellis. When Gerald Ellis bought the Meadowbank property at Bushy Park in 1976, he inherited a small vineyard planted by Richard Winspear in 1974, and, despite Department of Agriculture discouragement, expanded it to 11 hectares. The Meadowbank Estate project grew from the realization that cellar door sales would be central to the success of the venture and the Cambridge site, close to Hobart would be far more accessible to visitors than Bushy Park, which is 60 kms from the capital.⁵ The Coal River Valley offered the greatest concentration of small vineyards in the state, and an easy driving distance from Hobart making it a perfect day trip wine route. The Meadowbank Estate combined a restaurant, tasting area, function facilities and a barrel room, all set amongst 10 hectares of vines. As an opening bonus, Ellis was able to tempt Hobart chef and wine writer Graeme Phillips out of kitchen retirement to design the menu and get the kitchen up and cooking.

⁴ Fosters sold Cellarmasters in 2007, but retained the Heemskerk label as a specialist restaurant brand.

⁵ Gerald Ellis, *Oral History Recording No. 21* (Hobart: 2010).

Meadowbank opened on the day that Australia adopted a General Sales Tax or GST. A heated tax debate had been dividing the Tasmanian industry for a year or more. National industry lobbying had achieved a \$300,000 wholesale exemption threshold for the WET (Wine Equalisation Tax), but the ungainly arrangement would involve vineyards paying the full 29% WET, then claiming 14% rebate from the Federal Government and 15% from the State Government. At the same time, they would be paying 10% GST on all sales and claiming 10% of input costs. Not unreasonably, the industry was seeking some simplification of this tortuous arrangement.

August, 2000 marked the passing of one of the industry's founders, Claudio Alcorso, who had planted the first vines in the south of the state at Moorilla in 1958 and had since done so much to develop the industry in Southern Tasmania, and to promote a culture of quality and excellence statewide.

Earlier in the year Tasmania had a visit from Professor Stan Howell, Professor of Horticulture, Viticulture and Oenology at Michigan State University. Professor Howell was an internationally accepted expert on cool climate viticulture and particularly in the area of frost damage and control. His address to the VAT meeting in January was very timely, as in October that year a series of severe late Spring frosts hit the state, causing widespread damage. Temperatures as low as -5.5 degrees rendered wind machines ineffective and the only vineyards untouched were those with spray protection. Despite this early setback the 2001 vintage would set new records both for total tonnage and yield per hectare.

The industry continued to put resources and effort into local and interstate promotion, with the VAT marketing committee, led by Kim Seagram, increasingly supported both by the Departments of Tourism and Economic Development.

The Son of Wine Flight 2000 in February was backed up by an active and ongoing Visiting Journalists' Program, and a strong Tasmanian representation at Wine Australia held in Melbourne in November. In February, 2001, the first Sparkling Tasmania event was held as part of the Festival of the Senses in Launceston. Combining promotion with education, this was the first serious attempt to promote Tasmania's growing reputation

for sparkling wine, and saw Tasmanian wines holding their own against sparklers from France, USA, Spain and New Zealand. A special guest was Australia's leading exponent of sparkling winemaking, Ed Carr from BRL Hardy.

A more dramatic illustration of the rise of Tasmanian sparkling wine came in February when the illustrious Champagne house Veuve Cliquot Ponsardin used a Melbourne law firm to take legal action against Granton vignerons Steve and Monique Lubiana. While producing only 1000 cases a year, Lubiana had established a formidable reputation for his sparkling wines, with their distinctive mango-coloured labels. Veuve Cliquot claimed exclusive rights to use the colour orange in its packaging and argued that the colour mango was merely a means to circumvent their copyright. They gave Lubiana a month to remove his product from the market. Steve Lubiana was successful in gaining an extension to that deadline, but eventually succumbed, unable to finance a protracted legal battle against the French giant. He saw the legal challenge as evidence of growing French concerns about the quality of sparkling wines coming out of Tasmania.

Later that year, Hardy's were to make an even more dramatic demonstration of confidence in Tasmania as the sparkling wine state. The company, guided by winemaker Ed Carr, had been using increasing proportions of Tasmanian fruit in their premium sparkling wines, particularly in the top of the range *Arras*. In June the company announced the purchase from Pipers Brook of the Ninth Island vineyard and winery, formerly Rochembe, for \$10 million. The name of the vineyard would be changed to Bay of Fires⁶ and the winery would be its production base both for sparkling wine base and a range of table wines under the Bay of Fires label. For Pipers Brook it represented only a small reduction in available vineyard area and disposed of a winery that was surplus to its requirements. Andrew Pirie said at the time that the money would be used to finance the purchase of a warmer climate vineyard interstate, and soon began to advance those plans. After some negotiation he had reached an agreement with Lion Nathan which would involve Lion Nathan taking a 40% stake in Pipers Brook, and in return Pipers Brook would take control of Parker Estate in Coonawarra and Peppertree

⁶ Somewhat misleadingly, as the Bay of Fires is on Tasmania's East coast.

Wines in the Hunter Valley. This was to be the beginning of Pipers Brook's national strategy. At the last moment, there was a change of management at Lion Nathan and the plan was put on hold, then subsequently changed, with the new plan involving the acquisition of Petaluma. In retrospect Andrew Pirie believes that it was their failure to pull off the deal with Lion Nathan that led to the coming takeover by Dutch company Kreglinger.

In June, shortly after the Ninth Island sale to BRL Hardy, Kreglinger targeted Pipers Brook for a takeover bid and began buying the shares. The company, operating in Australia principally as wool and skin exporters, had decided to diversify into wine and had already established the 200 hectare Norfolk Rise vineyard and winery in the Limestone Coast region of South Australia. Andrew Pirie's first knowledge of the move was a phone call from a Swiss bank representative in Melbourne, stating that they had acquired five percent of the shares. This did not seem to be a concern at the time, but Pirie gradually realized that they were going to continue to purchase shares. The motivation was not entirely clear- it seemed to be an entry into the world of wine by a family with no previous connection to the industry. In a colourful comparison, Andrew Pirie describes the acquisition as something like the German invasion of France, where the victors were "celebrating the ownership of vineyards without fully understanding the business or why they were in it".⁷ The takeover came at a time when Pipers Brook was vulnerable. Shares had been falling since a low yielding 1999 vintage with operating revenue down 7% and the company declaring an after-tax loss of \$74,000 for the 1999/2000 financial year. Pirie himself was caught in a marginal lending squeeze on a falling market. In reflection, he believes that he seriously underestimated the loyalty of his shareholders and had got into the mindset of behaving like a public company. He believes now that had he gone to the shareholders with the company's problems, they would have come to the rescue. Nevertheless, Kreglinger continued to acquire shares, and, on October 18, 2001, the Board of Pipers Brook decided to unanimously recommend the Kreglinger offer to shareholders.

⁷ Pirie, *Oral History Recording No. 11*

The previous day, Andrew Pirie had agreed to sell 1,440,778 shares to Kreglinger, representing 9.4% of Pipers Brook's issued capital, "driven by Dr. Pirie's personal circumstances."⁸

The offer was formally announced on November 21, to acquire all of the issued shares of Pipers Brook Vineyard Ltd at \$2 per share. The offer represented a 20% premium over the current share price and was conditional on Kreglinger acquiring 90% of the company's shares. In November, Kreglinger waived its 90% condition, and on December 4, made the offer fully unconditional. The fact that Andrew Pirie had sold his shares was a major factor in persuading reluctant shareholders to sell, and Kreglinger achieved their majority holding, agreeing to keep Andrew Pirie as CEO and chief winemaker, on a five year contract. On the positive side, Pirie believed that Kreglinger could provide the capital to take the business to the next level, and its international connections could facilitate export opportunities in many ways, including the provision of warehousing and distribution throughout Europe.

At Campania, work was beginning on what was to be the largest vineyard in the south, at Roslyn Estate. In a \$4 million investment, 46 hectares of the 408 hectare property was planted in 27 different blocks, selected to suit particular grape varieties. This was the first use in the state of the managed investment scheme, with 47 individual investors. The agricultural managed investment schemes were popular with investors because of the generous upfront tax deductions allowed by the Government to promote rural development.

After years of debate and disagreement, in 2001 the Winemakers Federation of Australia had arrived at a national policy on taxation to be promoted up to the Federal election expected later in the year. This involved brokering an agreement between the Wine and Brandy Producers' Association, the Australian Regional Winemakers' Forum, the National Small Wineries Coalition and the six state associations...no small accomplishment. A united wine industry would seek an exemption from WET for the

⁸ Pipers Brook Vineyard Ltd., *Target's Statement in Response to the Cash Offer from Kreglinger (Australia) Pty Ltd* (Launceston: 2001). P.1

first 1 million litres of wine sold by an individual producer on the local market by any means- wholesale or retail, and a reduction in the rate of WET from 29% to 24.5%.

The policy was launched in Tasmania in March, 2001 at a function at Meadowbank attended by WFA representatives and several Federal politicians and candidates.

Wine tourism continued to grow, with another vineyard making a significant investment in a major wine centre, this time in the Huon Valley. Terry and Rosemary Bennett planted the Home Hill vineyard in 1993, and now saw the potential for the development of a new winery which would incorporate a restaurant, tasting and wine sales area and a functions centre. This stunning building, built of rammed earth and glass, was officially opened by the Premier, Jim Bacon in September, 2001. Once again, renowned chef Graeme Phillips was retained to design the menu and to break in the new kitchen. This was the fourth major wine tourism facility in the state, following Moorilla, Rosevears and Meadowbank

Julian Alcorso had now spent three years with Joe Chromy at Tamar Ridge and had enhanced his reputation as a winemaker with a string of medal and trophy winning wines, particularly rieslings and pinot noirs. On a quick trip to Hobart for the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra Ball, he was approached by Hobart accountant Carl Rooke, who said he had investors waiting if Alcorso would be interested in setting up a contract winemaking business in the south of the state. The idea was attractive to Alcorso, who believed that Andrew Hood had singlehandedly raised the standard of Tasmanian winemaking through his contract winery at Cambridge.⁹ Hood was now near capacity and welcomed the new venture which would help to handle a Tasmanian crop which was expected to double over the next few years. Alcorso resigned from Tamar Ridge in June, 2001, and set about planning Winemaking Tasmania which was to be ready for the 2002 vintage. The 2002 vintage was a small one, with crops drastically affected by a cold and wet spring in 2001 and the company crushed 100 tonnes for eight vineyards. The plan was to be processing 500 tonnes of grapes at the end of five years, but that target was achieved in the second year. Another important innovation was a mobile bottling line.

⁹ Alcorso, *Oral History Recording No. 41*.

Alcorso believed that 90% of the mistakes in winemaking occurred during bottling, but a state of the art bottling line which would be used for only two months a year was beyond the budget of most small estate wineries. The mobile line was capable of filling and sealing 3000 bottles an hour, using traditional corks, screw caps or crown seals for sparkling wine. Winemaking Tasmania has become an integral part of Tasmanian winemaking, now processing some 1200 tonnes per year.

Spring Vale Vineyard at Swansea on the East coast had built up a formidable reputation with a string of superb pinot noir and chardonnay wines, made by Andrew Hood. Three factors now persuaded Rodney Lyne to build his own winery. The first was the availability of a family winemaker in his daughter Kristin, who had completed her training and experienced vintages both in France and Chile, with the added bonus of having married a qualified viticulturist, David Cush. The second was financial- Spring Vale had reached a size where there were substantial savings in producing their own wine. The final factor was stylistic- Rodney Lyne felt that control of the whole process would allow the vineyard to develop a more distinctive and individual style that could not be achieved through contract winemaking.¹⁰ The Spring Vale winery crushed its first grapes in the 2002 vintage.

In March, 2002, the giant Tasmanian timber company Gunns Ltd. announced a move into the wine business with the \$14.8 million purchase of Tamar Ridge, the vineyard and winery developed at Kayena on the West Tamar by Joe Chromy. Gunns Chairman John Gay said that the company would spend another \$16 million establishing an additional 300 hectares of vineyard and winery infrastructure over the next two to three years. The announcement was generally well received by the Tasmanian industry, recognizing that Tasmania's biggest company had the financial muscle to achieve the critical mass of fruit Tasmania so badly needed to open up new markets. There were however, some misgivings. Firstly, Gunns proposed to use the tax effective Managed Investment Schemes to develop the vineyards, similar to the model they were using to develop tree plantations. Secondly, there was some suspicion that Gunns, under attack from

¹⁰ Lyne, *Oral History Recording No. 45*.

environmentalists for its forest practices, may be using the wine investment to “green up” their image. Finally there was some concern that Gunns ambitious vineyard expansion plans may flood the market with cheap fruit and disrupt the orderly marketing of Tasmanian wine. Some confidence was restored with the appointment of Will Atkins as General Manager. Atkins was an experienced and highly regarded industry professional who was previously general manager of St Halletts in the Barossa Valley.

Andrew Pirie’s tenure as CEO and chief winemaker with Kreglinger was an uneasy one, with a constant clash of cultures. One example was Kreglinger’s plan to blend Tasmanian wine with wine from their Limestone Ridge vineyard, to create a generic product in the Ninth Island range, a move that was strongly resisted by Pirie. Matters came to a head in February 2003, when Kreglinger management got wind that Pirie had been talking to Parker Estate in Coonawarra and he was summarily “marched out of the office”.¹¹

The blunt media announcement from Kreglinger, which made no mention of Andrew Pirie’s enormous contribution both to Pipers Brook and to the Tasmanian industry in general, was not well received. Graeme Phillips summed it up in the Mercury:

*Welcome to the unsentimental real world of a multinational corporation....
but welcome also to Tasmania, where respect, loyalty, dignity and
sentiment do have value....*¹²

Pirie started work as CEO of Parker Estate the next week, still based in Launceston but making frequent trips to Coonawarra. The 2003 vintage was the only Tasmanian vintage he has missed since 1979. After 12 months, Pirie recommended to the Parker family the sale of the business to the Rathbone wine group, owners of Yerring Station, and came to an agreement with Michael Beamish at Rosevears Estate to lease the West Tamar winery to make both the Rosevears wines and wines for other vineyards under contract.

For the last 12 months, the Vineyards Association of Tasmania had been working on a strategic plan to take the industry through the next five years. Launched at Meadowbank in November, 2002, it was a comprehensive plan incorporating marketing, production,

¹¹ Pirie, *Oral History Recording No. 11*

¹² *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 19 February, 2003, p.34

training and industrial relations, research and technical matters, taxation and the relationships with Government. It had an ambitious vision for 2007:

- *Tasmania's fruit production will have doubled, increasing the bearing hectares by 600 hectares. This will require industry investment of \$120 million in new capital by 2007.*
- *The dominant fruit variety will be pinot noir followed by chardonnay, while riesling, sauvignon blanc, pinot gris and cabernet sauvignon will round off the high quality wines for which Tasmania is respected.*
- *Our sparkling wine will develop further and come to be recognised as the best sparkling wine in the world outside Champagne.*
- *Tasmania will be widely recognised as the pre-eminent Australian region for pinot noir production.*
- *Tasmania will be exporting 31% of production internationally.*¹³

The production targets were to be frustrated by a poor vintage in 2007, but were realized the following year.

Panorama vigneron Michael Vishacki caused a stir in May when Premier Jim Bacon and wine legend Len Evans launched his 2001 Reserve Panorama Pinot Noir.... at an audacious \$160 a bottle. Evans described it as a "fantastic wine", and, after just a brief mention in the Weekend Australian, 500 of the 1000 bottles made were sold in 24 hours. Vishacki had also been acting as a viticultural consultant to Nocton Park, a 34 hectare vineyard project near Richmond, financed by a Chinese consortium, and with its wines destined for the Chinese market. First planted in 2000, Nocton Park was coming up to its first vintage and Michael Vishaki was appointed group winemaker. The head of the Chinese consortium, Li Chung Ming, was also developing an Australian Red Wine Village in his Youlong Tourist Park at Miyun, 100kms north of Beijing. In one of Tasmanian wine's more bizarre developments, the centerpiece of the village was to be an exact replica of Hobart's Government House, which would become the sales centre for

¹³ Vineyards Association of Tasmania, *Tasmanian Wine Industry Strategic Plan 2002-2007* (Launceston: 2002). P.1

Tasmanian wine and other produce in China. In November, Tasmanian Premier Jim Bacon travelled to China to officially open what the Chinese called the “Governor’s Mansion”.

Things were also active back in Tasmania. Respected international viticulturist or “wine doctor” as he preferred to call himself, Richard Smart had arrived in the state and was settling in for a long term stay with Tamar Ridge as his principal client, adding even more credibility to the Gunns development. Meadowbank had opened a \$750,000 extension which involved a redesigned tasting and sales area, an underground cellar and barrel room and a loft space for exhibitions. Moorilla Estate also announced plans for a \$3 million new wine centre replacing its present restaurant and visitor facilities. In other developments, Andrew Hood’s contract winemaking business, Hood Wines, amalgamated with Tony Scherer’s Frogmore Creek, and Andrew Pirie was successful in buying back his *Pirie* brand from Kreglinger, as part of the negotiations and settlement that followed his dismissal. Pirie was however, unable to gain the release of the maturing stock of *Pirie* which was rebadged *Kreglinger*.¹⁴ With the help of Robert Hill Smith who provided assistance with finance and distribution, Pirie was able to launch and build *Pirie* as a successful brand. Finally, the year brought a change of ownership of BRL Hardy with its amalgamation with the giant US Constellation group. This had a negative effect on the Tasmanian industry when Constellation froze all financial support for promotional events, such as the proposed sparkling wine event FIZZ04, which subsequently had to be cancelled.

In the 2004 New Year’s Honours List, industry pioneer Graham Wiltshire was awarded the Order of Australia, in recognition of his enormous and ongoing contribution to the Tasmanian wine industry over almost 40 years. Many industry figures took the opportunity to say publicly that they would not have been where they were today without Wiltshire’s advice, encouragement and expertise. He continued to play a part in the industry through leadership of the Tasmanian Vine Improvement Association and the Pinot Noir Forum.

¹⁴ While still with Kreglinger, Pirie was given the galling task of finding a graphic designer to design the *Kreglinger* label to go onto his *Pirie* sparkling wine.

Wiltshire was also a guest of honour when Robert Hill-Smith opened the Jansz Wine Room and Interpretive Centre in February, in the beautiful celery top building constructed by Wiltshire 20 years earlier as the Heemskerk Winery. Wiltshire was also, with French Champagne house Roederer, the founder of Jansz sparkling wine, with the 1989 vintage first released in 1991. In the following year, Wiltshire was awarded the highest honour by his peers when he was granted Life Membership of the Australian Wine Industry by the Winemakers' Federation of Australia.

Early in 2004 Joe Chromy made his third foray into the Tasmanian wine business with the purchase of the 60 hectare Old Stornaway vineyard at Relbia. Old Stornaway had been established primarily to provide fruit to the larger wineries, but found itself in financial difficulties and was put up for sale by the receivers. The highly regarded winemaker Jeremy Dineen, formerly with Hood Wines at Cambridge, joined him the next year to begin the establishment of Joseph Chromy Wines.

Growing tonnages were also pushing the expansion of both major contract winemakers, Hood Wines and Winemaking Tasmania. After the 2004 vintage topped 6,700 tonnes, Julian Alcorso's Winemaking Tasmania spent \$1 million doubling the winery's capacity to 850 tonnes, and Hood Wines added a complete sparkling wine disgorging and finishing line. Previously most smaller producers had to send their base sparkling wines to the mainland for finishing.

After literally years of lobbying and a campaign which cost the Winemakers' Federation of Australia in excess of \$1 million, the Federal Government announced in the 2004 Budget, that a new WET Producer Rebate would be introduced, providing an annual exemption from WET on the first \$1 million of wholesale sales. This meant that every producer would be eligible for a rebate of \$290,000,¹⁵ whether sales were cellar door, wholesale or retail. VAT President, and prominent tax campaigner Stuart Bryce said that the decision was "a first step to tax equity for small to medium wine producers in Australia."¹⁶ The tax fight had been a divisive one for the VAT and had led to a number of resignations from members dedicated to a volumetric system of taxation. Bryce took

¹⁵ The WET tax rate was 29%

¹⁶ *Vineyards Association of Tasmania Newsletter*. April, 2004, p.1

the opportunity to “thank also those who did not share our vision of tax relief- for remaining silent and allowing the industry to present a united front” and commented that the outcome was “for small producers at least, a far better result than a volumetric tax could ever have delivered.”¹⁷ The Senate passed the Bill on August 30 and the rebate came into force from October 1, 2004. The damage done to the VAT by the tax dispute was to be compounded later in the year with the resignation of Kreglinger Estates, Tasmania’s second largest wine producer, further weakening the organisation’s claim to speak for the whole industry.

With more than 200 vineyards now in Tasmania, vineyard management was a hot topic, and in October, the Royal Agricultural Society of Tasmania launched the Richard Langdon Trophy for the Tasmanian Vineyard of the Year, with the objective of promoting a high level of viticultural management in the state. The perpetual trophy, designed by prominent Tasmanian sculptor Stephen Walker, was donated by Mrs Caroline Matterson, to recognize her late husband Richard Langdon’s contribution to both the RAST and the Tasmanian wine industry. The award was to be managed in partnership with the Vineyards Association of Tasmania. Visits to participating vineyards would begin in January, 2005, with the inaugural award to be presented in April or May. The procedure, which has been maintained to the present, would be to make the presentation to the winner at a field day at their vineyard. The Tasmanian Vineyard of the Year has become a coveted trophy in the industry and has done a lot to promote good viticultural practice, quality assurance and environmental sustainability.

In 2004, Gunns had planted an additional 64 hectares at the Tamar Ridge Kayena site, and 82.9 hectares at the White Hills site in Relbia, under the supervision of viticultural consultant Richard Smart. The vineyard development had been in the hands of Rod Lyon, who had previously overseen the planting of 900 hectares of vines for the Reynolds Wine Company in Orange, NSW. The White Hills project converted a greenfield site to a vineyard in four months, including a 10 hectare, 210 megalitre dam and 530 kms of drip irrigation. Tamar Ridge now announced that they had purchased Coombend, the five hectare vineyard established by John and Jo Fenn-Smith near Bicheno in 1985, with plans

¹⁷ Ibid. May, 2004, p.1

for expansion on the East coast to 160 hectares by 2007. At completion, the Tamar Ridge area under vine would represent about a third of Tasmania total vineyard area.

Richard Smart was also providing consultancy to a number of other Tasmanian vineyards and, in the July, 2005 edition of the prestigious UK wine magazine *Decanter*, was named on the “Power List” of 50 people shaping the style of wine around the world.

In September, Tamar Ridge added to this high powered management team with the appointment of Andrew Pirie as chief executive and chief winemaker. Pirie was offered a five year contract which involved bringing both the *Pirie* brand and his contract winemaking into the Tamar Ridge group. This effectively ended any speculation that Gunns were not serious about the wine business, and built industry confidence in their ambitious expansion plans. Pirie had completed two vintages at Rosevears Estate but saw the Gunns investment as an opportunity for the state to capitalize on the reputation it had built up both at home and overseas. From Gunns point of view, the vineyard expansion needed to be matched by strong marketing and brand development, areas where Andrew Pirie had already established outstanding credentials.

2005 had three other landmarks. Despite the growing dominance of pinot noir in the state, the first Tasmanian red wine to make it into the distinguished Langton’s Classification listing, for Australia’s most collectible wines was Peter Althaus’ *Domaine A* cabernet sauvignon, proving that with the right site and winemaking skills you could produce quality and consistency in Tasmanian cabernet. In June Bay of Fires chief winemaker Fran Austin was named Young Winemaker of the Year at the Qantas/Australian Gourmet Traveller Awards. Austin led a growing band of young winemakers who were making their mark in Tasmania. Dubbed “the young Turks” by the media, the list included Natalie Fryar at Jansz, Joe Holyman at Stoney Rise¹⁸, Shane Hollaway at Delamere, Rebecca Wilson at Holm Oak, Greer Carland at Winemaking Tasmania, Matt Pooley at Hood Wines and Kristin Cush and David Cush at Spring Vale. In the following year, Tasmania, which produced less than one percent of the nation’s wine, would have three out of 12 nominations for Wine Australia’s “Young Gun” Wine Awards- Jeremy Dineen

¹⁸ Joe Holyman bought the Rotherhythe Vineyard at Gravelly Beach in 2005, renaming it Stoney Rise.

from Josef Chromy Wines, Anna Pooley who made the Heemskerk wines for Fosters, and Shane Holloway at Delamere. Finally the state lost its last links to the beginning of the modern Tasmanian industry, with the death of Cecile Miguet on October 9. After the death of her husband Jean in France in 1976, Madame Miguet returned to Tasmania and lived at Bridport until her death at the age of 99, just six weeks short of her hundredth birthday.

The signs of an industry reaching maturity were evident- not only had Tasmania clearly established its credentials as a premium cool climate producer, but serious investment had started to flow through the first half of the decade. Just four large projects, Tamar Ridge, Nocton Park, Josef Chromy and Roslyn Estate represented more some \$30 million in vineyard investment. Added to that was an explosion of small vineyard development- the number of productive vineyards in Tasmania jumped from 132 in 2000 to 244 in 2005. The national scene was not so rosy. The first five years of the new millennium had seen the Australian dollar jump from US52 cents in 2000 to US76 cents in 2005 with an ongoing upward trend. The quality of wine from low cost production countries was increasing and threatening Australia's market share. In some parts of Victoria, oversupply had caused grape prices to drop to \$150 per tonne, less than the picking cost. In the Barossa Valley, some 30,000 tonnes of grapes were simply left on the vine. While Tasmanian growers were still receiving the highest price per tonne in the country, demand from the large mainland companies was down and many growers were faced with the costs of turning unsold fruit into wine, then accepting the challenge of marketing the additional production.

The annual Deloitte wine industry survey showed that, although wineries selling less than \$1 million had improved their profitability marginally, due to the WET tax rebate, profitability of wineries selling between \$1 and \$5 million had dropped from 8% of revenue in 2004 to 2.7% of revenue in 2005, as competition driven by oversupply and the consolidation of retail markets had intensified. Overall, 40% of Australian wineries were actually losing money. The largest wineries (\$20 million+) were heavily dependent on export, which made up 60% of their revenue, and the price per litre for Australian wine

exported had dropped to \$3.78 per litre, down 33% in just three years. The oversupply was not expected to correct until 2010.¹⁹

Early in 2006, in conjunction with the Department of Economic Development, the VAT embarked on a review of the Tasmanian wine industry, and in particular, the effectiveness of the Association in setting the agenda and directions. There was a growing feeling that the old VAT, founded by the early growers for networking and political lobbying, was no longer adequate for a mature and growing industry, where the emphasis needed to be much more on marketing. The first Industry Review Day was held at Moorilla Estate in April, and was well attended, despite failing to attract a representative from the Kreglinger-owned Pipers Brook, or any of the vineyards which had resigned over the tax dispute. While this was a successful planning day, it was marred by the death of Simon Stanley, who suffered a heart attack at the meeting. Simon Stanley was founder, with his wife Isobel, of the Sugarloaf Ridge Vineyard and since 2004 had been on the Executive Committee of the VAT and chairman of its Technical Committee. A Steering Committee was formed to progress the review and at the Association's AGM in July, outlined a plan for a new peak body to replace the VAT. A motion was passed that would allow for the winding up of the VAT and the transfer of its assets to a new organization. As VAT President Stuart Bryce put it:

*the VAT has, in my time, become a dinosaur and its time for extinction is rapidly approaching. The VAT has served the Tasmanian wine industry well but it is now time to replace it with a structure that is more competent in marketing the product we have nurtured so well for so many years.*²⁰

Research by the Steering Committee showed that the most successful wine regions in Australia and New Zealand had three things in common- a representative body with a strong marketing focus, a full-time executive officer and a united industry.

In August, they announced that a new body called Wine Industry Tasmania would replace the VAT, with a full-time Executive Officer to be appointed. Marketing and

¹⁹ Deloitte's Wine Industry Group, *Annual Benchmarking Survey for the Australian Wine Industry- Vintage 2005* (Adelaide: Winemakers' Federation of Australia, 2006). P.3

²⁰ *Vineyards Association of Tasmania Newsletter*. August 2006, p.1

communications specialist Alison Williams was appointed the first WIT Executive Officer in December.

The Winemakers' Federation of Australia had continued to vigorously promote tax relief for the wine industry, aided by the evidence of low profitability, the rising dollar and flagging exports. Tasmania, through the VAT, played a significant role and in the May budget, the Federal Government announced an increase in the sales threshold for the WET rebate from the existing \$1 million to \$1.725 million. While this would make no difference to smaller Tasmanian vineyards, it would be a significant financial boost for the larger players.

In September, Gunns purchased Rosevears Estate, the substantial winery, restaurant and function centre opened by Launceston pathologist Dr Michael Beamish in 1999. While the Rosevears vineyard was only three hectares, the 300 tonne winery would help to handle the growing tonnage from newly established vineyards and the well sited cellar door would be an effective outlet for the company's several brands.

In October, Moorilla Estate owner David Walsh announced an exciting new development- a huge multi-million underground expansion of his Museum of Antiquities to become MONA, or the Museum of Old and New Art, a unique building to house his unique and esoteric collection of artwork. It would take four years to complete and become one of the most significant attractions on a vineyard anywhere in the world. Walsh also announced that he would be taking a more active role in the company and that long time general manager Tim Goddard, who joined Moorilla in 1995, would be leaving as part of a general management restructure.

Following incorporation in October, 2006, the first Board of Wine Industry Tasmania was appointed in February, 2007. It comprised former TT Line and Australian Tourist Commission Chair Nick Evers as Chairman, Launceston accountant and 10 Days on the Island Board member Scott Dawkins, lawyer and former Aberfeldy Cellars chief Graeme Lynch, Steve Lubiana, Andrew Pirie, Andrew Hood, and communications specialist Keryn Nylander. Graeme Lynch was appointed chairman in May, with Bay of Fires winemaker Fran Austin replacing Nick Evers on the Board. The following January Fran

Austin resigned due to work commitments and Rebecca Wilson from Holm Oak Vineyard was appointed.

The Gunns-owned Tamar Ridge brands were beginning to suffer because of growing community opposition to Gunns' proposal to build a \$1.4 billion pulp mill in the Tamar Valley. In February, 2005, Gunns had announced Long Reach on the East Tamar as its preferred site for the pulp mill, in proximity to several vineyards, including its own Kayena vineyard. Tamar Ridge was suffering guilt by association, with some consumers beginning to avoid the Gunns-owned labels. Some restaurants and retail outlets were beginning to report slowing sales of Tamar Ridge wines and some had removed the brands from their lists.²¹

A number of Melbourne restaurants, including that of celebrity chef Jamie Oliver, had boycotted the Tamar Ridge wines, prompting a media release from Tamar Ridge pointing out that such a boycott could damage the whole Tasmanian wine sector, and emphasizing the work the company was doing in sustainable viticulture and research. The Chairman of Gunns, John Gay, not known for his public relations skills, promptly blamed the Greens for the boycott. Earlier, in response to calls for compensation should the mill damage tourism businesses in the Tamar Valley, Gay had suggested that operators should instead be paying him when their businesses benefited from the mill. The Victorian Sommeliers' Association sent out a letter to its 350 members and, in Tasmania, the newly formed Wine Industry Tasmania sent a letter to all Members of Parliament expressing concern about potential odours, emissions and increased log truck traffic, the latter concern shared with the Tourism Council of Tasmania. The Australian Wine Research Institute also expressed concern that the chlorophenol compounds from the mill could contaminate nearby vineyards, pointing to documented cases in Switzerland and Italy. Gunns commissioned Dr Richard Smart, who had already done considerable work for the company, to assess the risk and Smart concluded that the very low levels of chlorophenol emissions would preclude any possibility of wine taint. The 27 vineyards in the valley

²¹ *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 1 August, 2007, p.29

were not convinced and the battle was to continue for another four years as Gunns continued to try to gain approvals and finance to proceed with the mill.

By this time, Tasmania was beginning to be taken seriously both nationally and internationally. Jancis Robinson, arguably the world's most influential wine writer, had just completed a comprehensive tasting of Australian wines in which "Tasmania did consistently well".

On her website she wrote:

*Tasmania may be treated as an anachronistic joke by some Australians, but not, I would wager, by Australian wine lovers. As vine growers on the mainland struggle to cope with increasingly severe droughts, heatwaves and saline irrigation water, their counterparts in Tasmania live on a green and pleasant island cooled by Atlantic currents and westerlies off the Southern ocean. The wines reflect the pristine atmosphere of the Island State and Australia's coolest climate with crisp, fresh acidity and well defined fruit flavours.*²²

In an article in *Australian Gourmet Traveller*, Nick Stock quotes Fosters' Chief White Winemaker, Glenn James, who worked with fruit from all over Australia:

*If we're after a true varietal expression, Tasmania offers us better quality than any other Australian region. Because of the long, even, sunny ripening season, flavours come at a lower sugar ripeness, and we get a balance of flavour, structure, finesse and body without worrying about alcohol. It's the only true cool climate region in Australia, based on latitude rather than altitude*²³

The Federal Government was also noticing Tasmania, with the local industry securing two important grants in 2007. The first was a grant of \$138,000 to Wine Industry Tasmania, under the Australian Tourism Development Program, to boost wine tourism in Tasmania's four key wine regions. The second, and more significant, was a research grant of \$900,000 from AusIndustry to improve the state's pinot noir and sparkling wines. The grant arose from a project initiated by Dr Richard Smart at Tamar Ridge in 2005. Asked how Tamar Ridge could make a contribution to the wine industry, Smart suggested the sponsorship of a PhD student to carry out research. Through the Tasmanian

²² Jancis Robinson, "In Praise of Tasmania," www.jancisrobinson.com. 24 March, 2007

²³ Nick Stock, "The Apple of Their Isle," *Australian Gourmet Traveller WINE* 8, no. 1 (2007). P.58

Institute of Agricultural Research (TIAR), the University of Tasmania agreed to provide a second scholarship and PhD candidates Reuben Wells and Fiona Kerslake began work in the 1995/1996 growing season. Kerslake's area of research was the effect of vineyard management practices on pinot noir grape and wine composition, and Wells studied the effect of leaf health on pinot noir grapes and wine. In 2005, Tamar Ridge had begun to use infra-red aerial photography to record plant cell density in the vineyard and Smart was keen to explore the effects, not just on yield and fruit, but on the actual wine produced from it. There was an unused shearing shed on the property and Smart used petty cash and his own resources to develop a very basic microwinery which became dubbed "Chateau Shearing Shed".²⁴

For the 2006 vintage, Kerslake and Wells helped to develop the facility and produced 350 separate wines for the research project.

On the evidence of this progress Smart and Dr Steve Wilson of TIAR applied to the Department of Economic Development for a grant of \$125,000 to refurbish the microwinery. They were successful and In March, 2007 the Minister for Primary Industries, David Llewellyn opened the facility. In the 2007 vintage some 450 wines were made, under much improved conditions. This early foundation led to the AusIndustry grant and the decision by the Australian Wine Research Institute to base a regional node in Tasmania at TIAR on the Hobart campus of the University of Tasmania, the first time they had established a base outside South Australia. AWRI senior research scientist Dr. Bob Danbergs would be based in Hobart. The \$900,000 AusIndustry grant was matched dollar for dollar by an industry consortium comprised of Tamar Ridge, Wine Industry Tasmania, TIAR, AWRI, and two industry suppliers, Croplands and Flextank, making \$1.8 million available for research into the viticulture and winemaking of pinot noir and sparkling wine in Tasmania's cool climate. It was the first substantial research into cool climate viticulture and winemaking ever undertaken in Australia.

²⁴ Richard Smart, "Success Stories Come from Wine Company's Own Research," *Australia and New Zealand Wine Industry Journal* 24, no. 3 (2009). P.11

WIT chairman Graeme Lynch believed that the importance of the research could not be overestimated, and that it could “position the Tasmanian wine industry as one of the world’s leading producers of truly cool-climate sparkling and pinot noir wines”.²⁵

Other valuable pinot noir research had been carried out by Kreglinger at Pipers Brook over the last two years, with 8000 vines of 24 different clones planted for evaluation, which would include micro-vinification, as the vines began to crop. A number of these were totally new clones to Tasmania, brought in under quarantine. The trials were conducted by Kreglinger’s chief viticulturist, Bruce McCormack, who was also chairman of the pinot noir clonal development and evaluation subcommittee of the Tasmanian Pinot Noir Forum.

By now, China had become the largest export market in Asia for Australian wine, importing some eight million litres annually. Tasmanian growers were beginning to target China for export opportunities. Peter Althaus of Domaine A and Stoney Vineyard had seen the potential early and had been working with the Department of Economic Development for some time establishing outlets, principally fine dining restaurants in several provinces, to the extent that, despite his strong European connections, China was now his principal export market. The Tasmania/China connection was strengthened when Michael Vishacki of Panorama Vineyard was appointed vineyard manager and chief winemaker for the 20 hectare Treaty Port Vineyard in the province of Shandong. Vishacki had been to China several times but “the offer came out of the blue”²⁶ and had him in China in September and October supervising the vintage and the winemaking.

Pinot noir, virtually unknown in Australia just 20 years ago, continued to gain popularity as public taste matured and the preference swung to lighter bodied, food-friendly wines. BRL Hardy now recognized the trend by introducing a pinot noir into their top-of-the-range Eileen Hardy brand. The iconic Eileen Hardy chardonnay had been using increasing proportions of Tasmanian fruit, and the pinot noir was to be a blend of fruit from Tasmania and the company’s cool Hoddle Creek vineyard in the Yarra Valley. The

²⁵ Mark Smith, "\$1.8m Research Program Sets Tone for New Regional Node," *Australian Viticulture* 13, no. 1 (2009). P.61

²⁶ Graeme Phillips, "China on a Plate," *The Mercury*, no. October 24 (2007). P.35

first release was the 2008, a very successful vintage in Tasmania, with almost 10,000 tonnes picked, easily the largest yield the state had yet seen. A relatively difficult mainland vintage escalated the price for premium Tasmanian fruit, with some growers achieving in excess of \$5000 per tonne.

Meanwhile some new varieties were appearing around the state. Steve Lubiana had been experimenting with nebbiolo which showed considerable promise and was now moving to commercial quantities. The same applied to Michael Vishacki at Panorama, who had been planting the Spanish variety tempranillo. In the north Tamar Ridge had been making trial quantities of albarino²⁷ and viognier, and liked what they saw. Fred Peacock at Bream Creek had long been a fan of schonberger and was now making a luscious sweet late-picked style. Kreglinger were experimenting with gruner veltliner. Selected sites were also producing top class merlot and shiraz.

In June, Michael Hill Smith enlarged his Tasmanian holdings when Hill Smith Family Vineyards acquired Dalrymple at Pipers Brook, the highly successful vineyard founded by Dr Bertel and Anne Sundstrup in 1987. Hill Smith saw Dalrymple as the group's specialist pinot noir vineyard. There were a number of other ownership changes in the north- the previous year Rebecca Wilson, a highly credentialed winemaker from Western Australia, had purchased the West Tamar Holm Oak Vineyard from Nicholas Butler and Shane Holloway, from an Adelaide Hills family vineyard and partner of Bay of Fires winemaker Fran Austin, bought Richard Richardson's Delamere Vineyard at Pipers Brook. Joe Chromy was continuing to develop his 61 hectare Relbia wine estate and opened his new \$2.5 million winery on his 77th birthday in December.

In September 2008, Wine Industry Tasmania, in conjunction with the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, and with Stuart Nettlefold as their new Executive Officer, staged the most successful promotion of Tasmanian wine to date, with the Tasmania Unbottled roadshow. 28 Tasmanian producers presented 150 wines to more than 300 media, trade and serious winelovers at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney and City Hall in Brisbane, with tastings and masterclasses. The roadshow was

²⁷ What they thought was albarino turned out to be the viognier-related variety savagnin

enthusiastically received, particularly by the wine trade and would become an annual event, with Melbourne added to the itinerary in 2009.

Tasmania's prospects looked bright- an expanding industry and a string of good vintages with the resulting wines increasingly gaining recognition. The only negative was the looming oversupply problem in the national industry, which was already putting downward pressure on prices. The Australian wine export bonanza was coming to a close, with a 12% decline in exports in 2008. The dollar was up to US85 cents, and this was not only inhibiting exports, it was promoting imports, which had now taken over 12% of the Australian wine market. In particular white wine, especially sauvignon blanc, was flooding in from New Zealand, where Marlborough had a similar oversupply problem. Despite drought and a record heatwave during harvest in Victoria and South Australia, a near record 2008 vintage compounded the problem. Despite efforts to promote Australia's premium brands in overseas markets, the country was a victim of its own success in selling good quality inexpensive wines and was firmly entrenched as a volume producer. The Deloitte benchmarking survey for the 2008 year showed that small to medium wineries around Australia were showing "negative to very low earnings before tax" The report went on pessimistically:

This oversupply situation has now reached a point whereby the Australian industry must take significant action to rectify the problem. If it does not then the viability of the industry in the medium to longer term could be seriously impacted. Not only does the excess supply deliver unsustainable returns to growers and wineries alike, it is also negatively impacting the image of Australian wine in export markets. Many Australian wine businesses have built up valuable export equity in their brands over the last 5–20 years only to see it being eroded by a flood of 'no-name' bulk wine exported at prices that are not sustainable in the long term.²⁸

Writing on her web site, UK wine guru Jancis Robinson said that "interest in Australian wine in both the UK and US seems to have evaporated as rapidly as a puddle in Alice Springs". Robinson believed the problem stemmed from the dominance of two

²⁸ Deloitte Wine Industry Group, *Annual Benchmarking Survey for the Australian Wine Industry- Vintage 2008* (Adelaide: Winemakers' Federation of Australia, 2009). P.4

companies, the US Constellation group and the brewers Fosters, over the Australian industry. She wrote:

*The big UK supermarkets played the big companies off against each other and it turned into a duel by discount. The average British wine drinker became conditioned into buying simply what was on promotion and Australian wine became increasingly synonymous with cheap wine.*²⁹

This concentration on the supermarkets meant that Australia had failed to build up a distribution network for its better wines

*which is an enormous shame since, contrary to the popular myth that Australian winemaking is about as romantic as a car assembly plant, there is a host of great, increasingly subtle, wine made by people every bit as driven as Europe's finest vigneron.*³⁰

Tasmania's response was to go it alone. It was, according to Wine Industry Tasmania's Stuart Nettlefold in the *Sunday Tasmanian*, the obvious choice, distancing the island from mainland Australia and preferring to be seen as a premium cool climate producer "west of New Zealand". Viticulturist Richard Smart believed that the decision to market Tasmania as a separate entity succeeded in protecting its reputation while the world went sour on Australian wine. "Tasmania has successfully branded itself away from Australia," he said. "It is gaining recognition internationally and rapidly becoming the premier premium cool climate wine producer."³¹ In the same article Andrew Pirie was quoted, saying "As a collective, the state's winemakers have taken some risks and it's paying off".³²

Wine sales were suffering from the discounted mainland and imported competition, but fruit prices were holding up. Mark Rowley, an analyst with the Australian Wine and Brandy Corporation reported that the average price for Tasmanian fruit increased by 4.5% in 2009, with an average price per tonne of \$2,561, nearly five times the Australian average price of \$517 per tonne.³³ In the context of the national grape glut, Tasmania was

²⁹ Jancis Robinson, "How Australia Went Down Under," www.jancisrobinson.com. 4 April, 2009

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Danielle McKay, "Let's Go It Alone," *Sunday Tasmanian* 2009. P.9

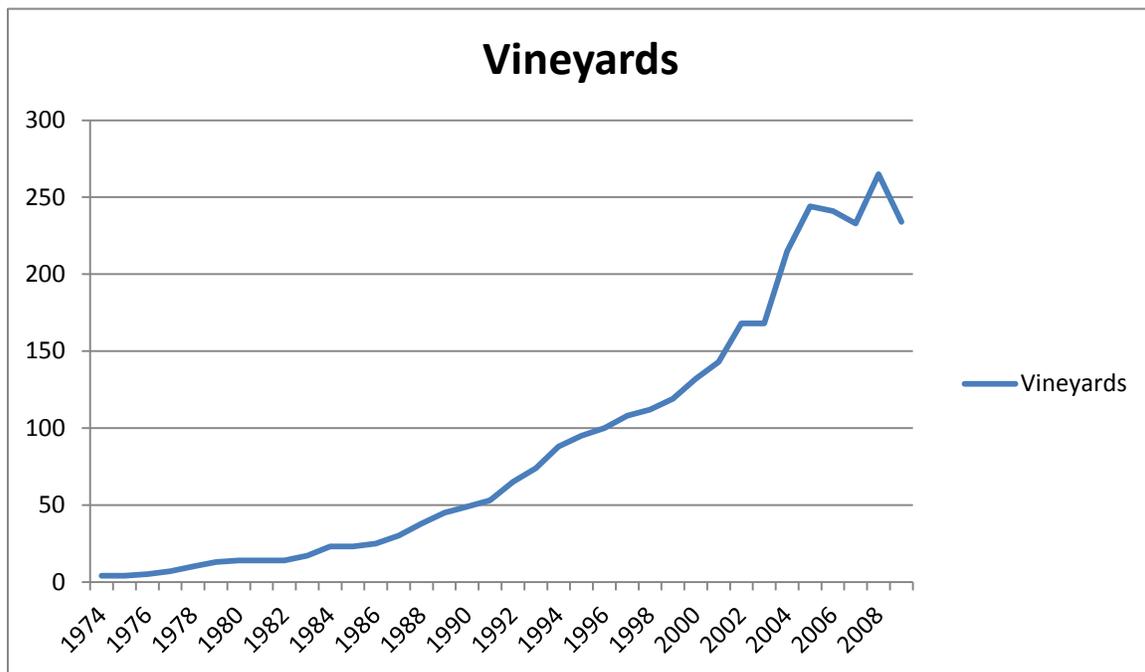
³² Ibid.

³³ Mark Rowley, "Tasmania: One of Australia's Coolest Wine Regions," *Wine Industry Journal* 25, no. 3 (2010). P.87

the only state where demand for winegrapes still exceeded supply. Although still producing less than 1% of the nation's wine, Tasmanian wine now made up 7% of wine sold in the premium and super premium categories, and the island's exported wine was averaging \$11 per litre, against a national average of \$3 per litre. Rob Selby in the UK journal *Food News* wrote that "the Australian wine industry would do well to place Tasmania front and centre in its bid to alter Australian wine's bargain basement image in some markets."³⁴

While there were beginning to be significant larger concerns, by far the bulk of the vineyards in Tasmania were small family owned affairs, relying on restaurant, mail order, special event and cellar door sales to survive, and vulnerable to any slump in tourism caused by the high flying Australian dollar. The number of vineyards was climbing towards 300 and had been growing rapidly for a decade or more.

Figure 9



Vineyard growth in Tasmania 1974-2009 Data from Wine Tasmania

³⁴ Rob Selby, "Tasmania Could Play Key Part in Repositioning Australian Wines," *Food News*, no. August, 2010 (2010). P.22

One of the national industry's strategies in response to the "wine-factory" image was the formation of the First Families of Wine, 12 family-owned companies which collectively had 1200 years of proud Australian winemaking history behind them. One of those families, Robert Hill Smith of Yalumba, had already moved into Tasmania and a second, Brown Brothers, was shortly to follow.

Wine Industry Tasmania had appointed its first industry development officer, David Sanderson, and one of his first tasks was the development and introduction of the Tasmanian Sustainable Viticulture Programme. This was an aspect of the industry being driven by Andrew Pirie in particular, who saw that a vineyard's environmental credentials were becoming increasingly important to the consumer. Tamar Ridge had already begun some environmental programmes, such as recycling winery waste water for irrigation and integrated pest management to minimize or eliminate the use of insecticides. Pirie was also concerned that some newcomers to the industry were attracted to the difficult path of organic viticulture and was keen to implement a "scientific organic" programme to avoid disasters. The WIT Sustainable Viticulture Programme provided an array of integrated tools that would guide growers to best practice sustainable management in areas like responsible use of agrochemicals, property planning and integrated pest management, with a self assessment guide which allowed growers to review and record their progress.

In March, 2010, WIT appointed Sheralee Davies as Chief Executive Officer. Her appointment was seen as a coup for Tasmania. With previous experience with Wine Australia and Constellation Wines, she was highly regarded in the industry, and respected for her marketing and communication skills.

While Tamar Ridge, under skilled management, was an undoubted success story, things weren't going too well for Gunns in other areas. The share price, well over \$4 when the company bought Tamar Ridge, was now under a dollar and falling. Five years after announcing the pulp mill in the Tamar Valley, community opposition had not abated, and Gunns seemed no closer to securing the equity partner they needed to make the project a reality. Long time directors John Gay and ex premier Robin Gray had been removed from

the Board and in June the new CEO Greg Lestrage announced that the company would be refocusing on its core business in the timber industry. Tamar Ridge and their retail interests were up for sale. This caused considerable nervousness in the industry- Tamar Ridge was easily the biggest player in Tasmania, producing 30% of the state's wine. If a prospective buyer chose to take the label downmarket it would threaten Tasmania's hard won image as a premium cool climate producer.

They didn't have to wait long to have those fears allayed. On August 16, the Victorian based family company Brown Brothers announced that they had purchased Tamar Ridge Estates for \$32.5 million. This was greeted with warmth and relief in the Tasmanian industry. Brown Brothers was seen as an ethical, innovative, quality focused company which would be an asset to the state. CEO Ross Brown explained that, suffering the effect of drought in north east Victoria, the company had for some time been looking for cooler sites with better water resources.

Their viticultural team looked at Tamar Ridge with no great expectations, but the work put in by Andrew Pirie, Richard Smart and Will Adkins paid immediate dividends. "We had no idea of the investment and care that they (Gunns) had put into their assets, and when the viticultural guys came back all fired up, it ticked all of the boxes for us," Ross Brown said. "The vineyards really do look drought-proof and all the environmental stuff that we have been getting suggests Tasmania will be less impacted by global warming."³⁵

It also meant that Brown Brothers could add pinot noir to their portfolio and develop their premium sparkling wine range.

The response of Australia's leading wine writer James Halliday was even more interesting, writing "the moment I heard of the acquisition, I felt it was a masterstroke and promptly told executive director Ross Brown so. The reasons are numerous. Win, lose or draw on global warming, Tasmania holds all the aces." What follows is an overwhelming vote of confidence in Tasmanian viticulture. "It is beyond doubt that Tasmania grows the best grapes for sparkling wine", "I believe that Tasmania has the

³⁵ Jeni Port, *Winestate*, no. November/December, 2010 (2010).p.44

greatest potential for pinot noir in Australia”, and “they (the state’s rieslings and chardonnays) are brilliantly fresh, lively and pure, the flavours long and intense.”³⁶

A nice footnote to the acquisition was the family’s connection to early Tasmanian viticulture. Ross’s father, the late John Brown, had been friendly with Jean Miguet, the Frenchman who planted the first vineyard of the modern era in 1956. He had visited the vineyard (with his son Ross) and assisted Miguet to source the varieties he wanted from the mainland.

Premier David Bartlett was playing his part, proposing ambitious irrigation projects which would turn Tasmania into “the nation’s foodbowl”, with viticulture very much part of that plan. The Tasmanian industry was less enthusiastic about Bartlett’s plan to exploit the state’s abundant water resources by luring Murray-Darling irrigators to Tasmania, feeling that future expansion should be demand-led rather than production-led.

Wine Industry Tasmania, which by now had been rebadged as Wine Tasmania continued to spread the word, with the now annual roadshow to Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne a much anticipated event in the wine trade, attracting 534 trade attendee in 2010, many of them from the nation’s top restaurants.

And finally, Tasmania was given the international nod of recognition when, in a remarkable coup for such a small producer, it was announced that the state would host the prestigious International Cool Climate Wine Symposium in February, 2012. Andrew Pirie, who led the Tasmanian bid contingent at the 2010 Symposium in Seattle believed it was a significant milestone for the state: “It’s a real coming of age for the Tasmanian wine industry...it puts us into the big league.”³⁷

A centerpiece of the Symposium would be the presentation of the results of the three year \$1.8 million research project into cool climate pinot noir and sparkling wine that grew from Dr Richard Smart’s modest beginnings at Tamar Ridge five years ago. 500 delegates were expected from all the leading cool climate areas of the world and leading

³⁶ James Halliday, "Tap into Tassie," *Epicure*, no. September, 2010 (2010). P.11

³⁷ Anna Vidot, "Tasmanian Wine Industry to Showcase International Stakeholders," in *ABC Rural Hour* (Australia: 2010).

international wine writer Jancis Robinson was confirmed as keynote speaker. It was formal recognition of Tasmania's place as one of the world's premium cool climate viticultural areas. It was a remarkable journey in a very short time- just 35 years since Andrew Pirie planted the state's first commercial scale vineyard and 54 years since Jean Miguet planted the first vines at Lalla in north east Tasmania.

The last word belongs to a man who had done so much for both the New Zealand³⁸ and Tasmanian wine industries, viticulturist Dr Richard Smart, who, towards the end of 2010, wrote a paper entitled *The potential for growth of the Tasmanian wine sector- might it become the Pinot isle?*.³⁹ In it, he drew comparisons between Tasmania and New Zealand, pointing out that the temperature climate of Tasmania was more like New Zealand than any other country in the world. He put down the relatively slow growth of Tasmanian viticulture to the traditional warm climate base of the Australian industry, which had "considerably under-invested in genuine cool climate viticulture", but also pointed out that the New Zealand wine industry had not expanded significantly until the Marlborough region reached 2,500 hectares, giving it the critical mass to make an impact on world export markets. He argued that the Tasmanian industry had the capacity to reach 4000 hectares in the next decade, without supply exceeding demand. Smart outlined a number of ways that the Tasmanian Government could help the expanding wine sector, again using New Zealand as a model. The first was raising the profile of Tasmanian wine by assisting with trade promotions, conferences, wine festivals etc. The second was to assist in the development of a world-class cool climate grape and wine research centre in Tasmania. The third, and perhaps most interesting suggestion was a meso-climate survey of potential wine regions in the state, which could "develop land-use maps showing showing temperature sufficiency and frost risk for grape and other crop production. This information could be combined with existing soil maps to produce land capability documents which could guide further investment following supply of irrigation water, as well as on-farm storage."

³⁸ In 2007, Smart was inducted into the New Zealand Wine Hall of Fame.

³⁹ Dr Richard Smart, "The Potential for Growth of the Tasmanian Wine Sector," (Launceston: 2010).

The paper was published later in the Wine & Viticulture Journal, and by that time Smart had added this conclusion:

Tasmania has an excellent potential to expand its winegrape plantings and to produce ultra-premium wines for the domestic market and for export. It has land and water resources in abundance. Expansion of production is not limited by physical resources. The current limitations to growth are the existence of a market share for Tasmanian wines, and the confidence and capital for grape and wine production growth.

For the Tasmanian wine sector to grow sustainably it needs to reinforce its competitive advantage- this lies in premium and ultra-premium wine production in genuine cool climates that will tend to stay cool as the world warms. Vineyard expansion should not exceed that of the market. Genuine cool climate resources are otherwise limited in Australia, and to a similar extent elsewhere in the winegrowing regions of the world.⁴⁰

Smart, a man with 40 years experience in the international wine industry believed that, although there had so far been a “lack of awareness of potential by investors”, that Tasmania was now strategically positioned for a decade or more of expansion and international recognition.

⁴⁰ ———, "The Potential for Growth of the Tasmanian Wine Sector... Might It Become the Pinot Isle?," *Wine & Viticulture Journal* no. March/April, 2011 (2011).

CONCLUSION

Wine People

This thesis has outlined how the Tasmanian industry developed, listing when and where early vineyards were established, but it is also interesting to examine why vineyards were planted- what were the motivations of the industry's pioneers?

When a new wine region is opened up, often against both conventional wisdom and official advice, the proponents are usually passionate amateurs, driven by the quest for great wine.

The early pioneers of the Tasmanian industry fall into three broad types:

1. Passionate amateurs- not relying on the vineyard as a principal source of income; wine lovers motivated by the desire to make great wine.
2. Investors- attracted first by the tax advantages of establishing a vineyard, and seeing it as more attractive than other tax-effective rural pursuits. A characteristic of this group was that they were quickly transformed into passionate amateurs. A subset of this group has been farmers looking to diversify into other crops.
3. Professionals- generally with some background in viticulture or the wine industry, intending to rely on the vineyard as a principal source of income.

Often new startups will fall across two or even all three of these categories.

Small “hobby” vineyards have sometimes been described as “vanity projects”. Certainly vineyards seem to be almost compulsory appendages for celebrities, with the famous vigneron including David Beckham, Francis Ford Coppola, Sir Cliff Richard, Mick Hucknall, Bob Dylan, Ernie Els, Retief Goosen, Sting, Gérard Depardieu, Olivia Newton John, Sam Neill, Joe Montana and Madonna among others. The Tasmanian industry is short on celebrities, but doctors and lawyers are well represented. Given that very few vineyards are established on the advice of an accountant, there are clearly other motives at work, but those initiating these “vanity projects” almost invariably become committed to the industry, with many moving on to zealot status.

Melbourne journalist Keith Dunstan, himself a Mornington Peninsula vigneron, summed it up in his book *My Life with the Demon*:

*Human beings are beset by strange urges, nearly all of them financially disastrous. Some want to own a racehorse.....some spend a lifetime trying to write the great Australian novel. Others, Walter Mitty style, have the urge to produce their very own chardonnay, pinot, or illustrious cabernet. They see themselves being the perfect host, producing the wine of the evening. Giving a modest Ray Milland smile they say: 'Actually, this is one of ours.'*¹

Whatever the initial motivation, a passion for wine and the wine industry seems to have been universally infectious in Tasmania. The industry is littered with people who came into the industry for pragmatic reasons and were quickly infected with the wine virus, for which there is no known cure.

To take three examples from just one region of Tasmania, the East coast. Geoff Bull was an abalone diver, who, looking for investment opportunities, bought a property south of Bicheno. Unsure how to develop it, he called in to see Claudio Alcorso at Moorilla and decided on a vineyard. From someone with no particular interest in wine, Geoff Bull became one of the state's leading producers, serving a decade on the executive committee of the Vineyards Association of Tasmania and devoting a large part of his life to the production of great wine.

Brian Franklin was another abalone diver looking for investment opportunities and with no background in wine. His establishment of a vineyard at Bicheno has led to his becoming one of Tasmania's most passionate and dedicated winemakers, spending the winter of every year working in Burgundy.

Further down the East coast near Swansea, Rodney Lyne was the fourth generation of his family to farm the historic Spring Vale property. He knew nothing about wine but needed

¹ Keith Dunstan, *My Life with the Demon* (Melbourne: Wilkinson Books, 1994).p.79

to diversify and looked on viticulture as just another farming enterprise. Grapes were a just a crop and he never contemplated the possibility of making his own wine. The vineyard now has its own winery run by Rod's daughter and son in law, and Rod has been one of the most active and passionate growers in the state. A project which started as a minor diversification became all-consuming.

Whatever the scientific explanation for this phenomenon, the transformation is certainly demonstrable in small vineyards around the state. People growing wine grapes seem to be caught up by the romance and the challenge of the process and some describe the quest for a great wine as similar to painting a great picture or composing great music. Or as wine writer and vigneron James Halliday puts it: "ugly or beautiful, the child is yours, and there is no joy like parenthood."²

The potential superiority of wines from cooler climates has been long recognized in Australia. James Busby in his *Treatise on the culture of the Vine*, which was widely advertised and sold in Tasmania, wrote:

*...in Burgundy, where the sun's rays do not act so powerfully in the production of saccharine matter, the wines are distinguished by a richness and delicacy of taste and flavour, while those produced under the burning sun of Languedoc and Provence, possessing no virtue but spirituousity, are generally employed in distillation.*³

The Swiss and German "vine dressers" who came to Australia would certainly have recognized the limitations of the country's warmer areas. William Henty, probably the most enthusiastic promoter of Tasmanian viticulture, addressed the Royal Society of Tasmania in 1860:

*Mr Henty also stated that M. Dardel, a Swiss wine-grower in Victoria, had expressed an opinion that the frosty spring nights of the Tasmanian climate rendered it preferable for wine-growing to that of Melbourne.*⁴

² James Halliday, *Vintage Halliday* (Sydney: Magazine Promotions Australia, 1982). P.226

³ James Busby, *A Treatise on the Culture of the Vine and the Art of Making Wine* (Sydney: R.Howe, 1825). P.6

⁴ *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 8 October, 1860, p.2

His lifelong passion for Tasmanian winemaking extended to his deathbed, when he dictated a letter on viticulture to his daughter Mary Sommers in London, the day before he died. While Henty never expressly claimed a cool climate superiority for Tasmania, he was very aware of its climatic similarity to the great European wine-growing countries, where he had spent much time. In the letter, published in the *Mercury* in 1881, he writes:

When I left Tasmania, now about 16 years since, the thought most immediately present to my mind, tending to the advancement of the colony, was the subject of wine-growing. Having practiced it myself so far as to prove its certainty of success by the making of a fair, if not somewhat better, claret from the pure juice of the grape, without any admixture of sugar, water or spirits, and knowing the opinions of other competent wine-growers of foreign countries, and the adaptability of every element of position, site and climate in the colony as compared with the wine-growing countries, I expressed myself strongly that in the course of a few, a very few years, there would arise something approaching a furore for the practice of establishing vineyards in this colony.⁵

The prominent advocate of Victorian viticulture, the Rev. John Ignatius Bleasdale,⁶ who passionately promoted wine as an antidote to spirit drinking, pointed out the advantage of cooler climates in his treatise *On Colonial Wine*:

Whatever the wine is, sweet or dry, one thing is certain, that in hot climates you can never produce wine with the perfume (bouquet) peculiar to those of colder regions. Nature has fixed the impassable barrier. If you are to have the perfumed wines of France- Sauterne or fine Chablis for example- you must also have all the other conditions, especially slow, long-controlled fermentation at a low temperature....⁷

In 1870, he spent some time in northern Tasmania recuperating from an illness. He was moved to write a letter to the *Cornwall Chronicle*:

I have seen many a thousand acres of land worth little for anything but vineyards. Your readers may start at this, but it is true all the same..... It may astonish many to be told that this northern portion of the Island is capable of producing finer and rarer kinds of wine than we can ordinarily grow in Victoria. Our climate is too hot- our autumn at any rate is too hot to admit of our making fine wines like Hock, Sauternes, Chablis, Burgundy etc. The grapes ripen rapidly and the fermentation goes on tumultuously. It

⁵ Ibid. 23 November, 1881, p.2

⁶ Also known as John J. Bleasdale- his book *On Colonial Wine* was published under that name.

⁷ Bleasdale, *On Colonial Wines- a Paper Read before the Royal Society of Victoria*. pp15-16

*is impossible to grow in the same place strong full bodied wines like the ports, sherries and maderas and fine bouquet wines like the sauternes, hock and burgundy. These latter require a particularly cold climate and absolutely demand long and slow fermentation to produce those esters which yield their distinctive bouquet and flavor. The northern portion is the place for yielding this rare class of wine. I drank a sample of wine at George Town, made by the Rev. Mr Fereday quite good enough to warrant me in saying all that I have just said, if I needed such evidence. I venture to say that, if everything else fails, there is still a world of wealth in your vineyard country, but, like everything else, it needs much skill, some patience and a moderate outlay to arrive at it. This class of wine will never want a market, if properly made and matured. They are just what is needed by European settlers in the Pacific Islands.*⁸

Diego Bernacchi, who planted his first vines on Maria Island in 1885, also understood the benefits conferred by a cooler climate. In 1885 he wrote:

*The soil and climate of a great part of Tasmania, and especially of the East coast, is eminently favourable to the growth and cultivation of the mulberry and vine, and particularly for the best-flavoured, sound and wholesome claret, on account of the temperate climate.*⁹

Six years later he addressed the Tasmanian Agricultural Conference on the subject of viticulture, putting before them “a few bottles of claret and hock” made on Maria Island.

With age he believed that the claret would be “superior to any of the clarets produced in Australia.”¹⁰ He believed that the wine “had the bouquet of real French claret, which he must confess he had not yet tasted in Australia.”¹¹

These cool climate advantages, and the comparison with European wine growing nations, were of course the identical arguments used by Jean Miguet, Claudio Alcorso, Graham Wiltshire and, in a more scientific and structured form, by Andrew Pirie, when Tasmania was “rediscovered” viticulturally between 1956 and 1974.

While at first glance it would seem that the industry has come a long way in the 55 years since Jean Miguet planted those first vines, on closer examination, and by comparison

⁸ *Cornwall Chronicle*, (Launceston). 18 June, 1870, p.2

⁹ *The Mercury (Hobart)*. 28 March, 1885, p.2

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 29 January, 1891, p.1

¹¹ *Ibid.*

with similar regions internationally, we really need to explain why it has grown so slowly.

I propose to compare the development of the Tasmanian wine industry with parallel developments in two viticulturally similar areas, the South Island of New Zealand and Oregon in the United States. These areas are climatically similar, socially and economically comparable, both have a similar development timespan, both focus on pinot noir as the principal red wine variety, but both have grown far more quickly than has Tasmania. The South Island of New Zealand now has close to 25,000 hectares of productive vineyard and Oregon has some 8,500 hectares, while the area under vine in Tasmania is just 1,500 hectares.

Although Oregon has a population of over three million and its largest city, Portland, has more than 500,000 people, the state's other cities are about the same size, or smaller than Hobart. The South Island of New Zealand has just over one million people, but the main cities in its wine regions are Dunedin (116,000) in Otago, Blenheim (30,000) in Marlborough and Nelson (60,000) in the Nelson wine region.

None of the three regions to be compared benefit from close proximity to a major city, as do regions like the Yarra Valley to Melbourne, the Hunter Valley to Sydney or the Napa Valley to San Francisco.

The timelines are remarkably similar- all three regions had a nineteenth century history of winemaking. Modern commercial development in the South Island of New Zealand began in Marlborough in 1973, a year before the commercial developments at Pipers Brook and Bream Creek in Tasmania. Oregon's first 20th century vines were planted in 1961, but the industry really took off after the 1975 Eyrie Vineyard pinot noir, made by David Lett, beat a number of distinguished French Burgundies at two blind tastings in Paris in 1979.

Another factor common to all three regions was official opposition, despite an earlier history of viticulture in the three areas. Central Otago pioneer Alan Brady quotes Alister McKissock, scientific officer at the Te Kauwhata viticulture and winemaking research

station in 1967, saying “conditions in the South Island of New Zealand do not appear to favour grapegrowing for wine production.”¹²

Richard Sommer established the Hillcrest Vineyard near Roseburg, Oregon in 1961 “after he had been firmly advised that *vinifera* grapes could not be grown in Oregon”.¹³

The Tasmanian Department of Agriculture’s early discouragement of viticulture has already been documented in this thesis.

Although the Oregon and South Island New Zealand wine industries share similar beginnings, and have grown at a similar rate, we see totally different patterns of development.

In Oregon, the industry is still largely dominated by small, family-owned wineries. In 2004, most of the Oregon wineries produced less than 5,000 cases per year. This still produced rapid growth- 10 years after the first vineyard was planted, there were 34 wineries in Oregon. Most of this growth was in the Willamette Valley, in the north of the state, close to the major city of Portland. There has been some investment by Californian wineries, one by the French, Robert Drouhin, a prominent Burgundy vigneron, and even one by an Australian, Brian Croser. The largest development, the King Estate, has a 100 hectare vineyard. As of 2011, Oregon has 419 wineries processing fruit from 8,300 hectares of vineyard.¹⁴ By comparison, in 2010, Tasmania had 29 wineries processing fruit from 1500 hectares of grapes.

New Zealand’s South Island provides an even more dramatic comparison, but from a totally different beginning.

In 1972, New Zealand’s biggest wine company, Montana, at that stage operating only in the North Island, decided to expand into the Marlborough region of the South Island, and were able to purchase 1,173 hectares of good viticultural land at an average price of

¹² Alan Brady, *Pinot Central- a Winemaker's Story* (Auckland: Penguin, 2010). P.64

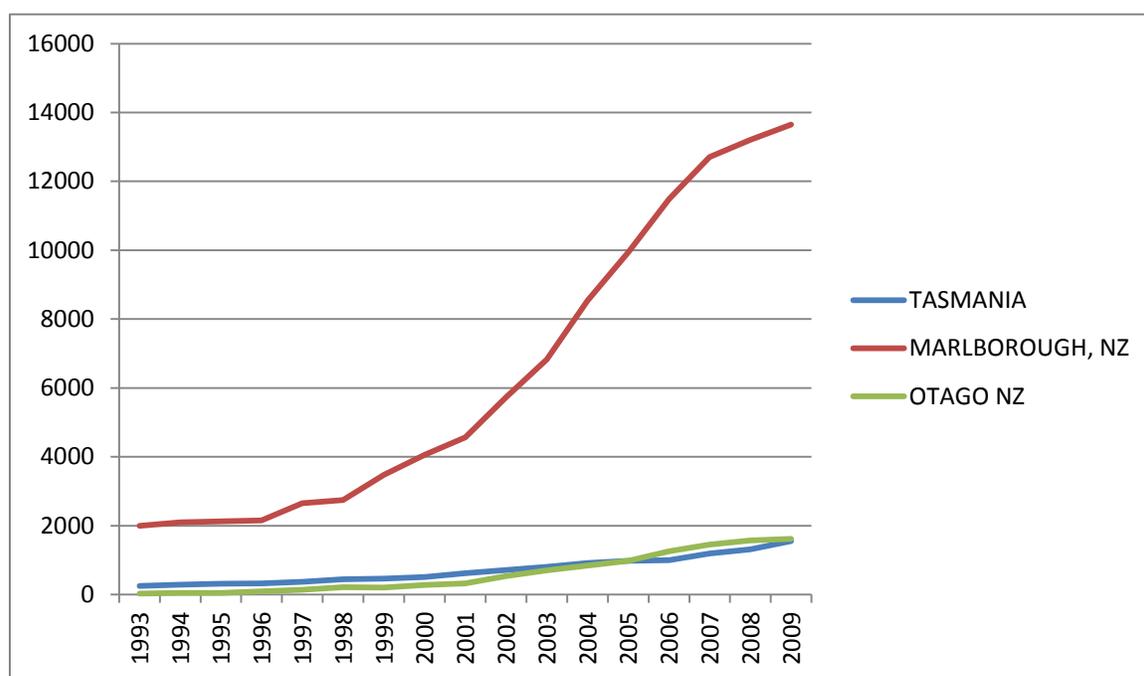
¹³ Jancis Robinson (ed), *The Oxford Companion to Wine*. P.692

¹⁴ *2010 Oregon Vineyard and Winery Report*, (Portland: National Agricultural Statistics Service, Oregon Field Office, 2011).

\$1,146 per hectare.¹⁵ Montana's main focus was mueller (or müller) thurgau, but they included some sauvignon blanc in their plantings.¹⁶ The region's success story began in 1986, when Marlborough sauvignon blanc enjoyed international success in the UK. Sauvignon blanc has driven the region's export success ever since, with the variety accounting for 70% of total New Zealand wine exports in 2010.¹⁷ By 1997 Marlborough had 2,655 hectares under vine and by 2008, that had grown to 23,000 hectares.¹⁸

Even a region like Central Otago, more remote, and in a more difficult viticultural climate than Tasmania, has expanded to 1500 hectares in just 25 years.

Figure 10



Industry growth Australia & NZ 1993-2010 Data from Wine Australia and Wine New Zealand

¹⁵ Tessa Anderson, *Jane Hunter- Growing a Legacy* (Auckland: Harper Collins, 2008). P.19

¹⁶ Keith Stewart, *Chancers and Visionaries- a History of Wine in New Zealand* (Auckland: Random House, 2010). P.349

¹⁷ Ibid. p.350.

¹⁸ *Wine Marlborough New Zealand*, (Blenheim: Wine Marlborough, 2010). P.1. Wine New Zealand gives a figure of 19,024 hectares for Marlborough.

Government policies have been a point of difference, with both the Oregon and New Zealand Governments more pro-active in fostering their early wine industries.

In 1983, the Oregon legislature created the Oregon Wine Advisory Board as part of the state Department of Agriculture, providing research and promotional support to the industry, funded from a percentage of wine tax.

In New Zealand, the Te Kauwhata and Ruakura research stations provided valuable research support for a young industry from the 1950s onward. In 1982, in what was seen as a coup for New Zealand, the Department of Agriculture appointed Dr Richard Smart as national viticulture scientist. Over the next eight years he guided the country's transformation "from the home of plonk to a respected fine wine producer."¹⁹ While Australia was conducting its own high level research, it was focused on warm climate production, and of little practical use to Tasmanian growers.

So what has held Tasmania back?

The state's ability to produce high quality, many would say world class, wines has been firmly established both in the showring and by commercial demand, both for wine and winegrapes. A great deal of research has been done, both through trial and error and through formal studies, to establish the most successful varieties for regions within the state, and the optimal viticultural management and winemaking techniques. Land is available at a price well under that of established mainland wine regions.²⁰ Water is available in many potential viticultural areas at a time when water is becoming a scarce resource in mainland Australia. All predictions of climate change suggest that Tasmania will be less affected than the warmer mainland regions.

Gregory Jones, from the Southern Oregon University studied nine European locations across a range of climate types and found that viticultural growing seasons have warmed

¹⁹ Stewart, *Chancers and Visionaries- a History of Wine in New Zealand*

²⁰ One restriction for Tasmania is that land is usually available in fairly small parcels, unsuited to broadacre commercial development

by an average 1.7° over the last 30 to 50 years.²¹ Australian climate researcher L.B. Webb predicts an annual temperature increase across Australia of between 0.3° and 1.7° by 2030, and an increase of between 0.8° and 5.2°C by 2070.²²

Dr Richard Smart applies the International Panel on Climate Change modeling to the south-east wine regions of Australia, showing a projected increase of between 1.5° and 3°C by 2070.²³ Smart suggests that, given a 2°C increase, the “regions that currently grow the majority of Australian winegrapes will be too hot for winegrape production, and better suited for table and raisin-grape production.”²⁴ He also argues that “three of Australia’s acknowledged cooler regions, the Great Southern, Coonawarra and Mornington Peninsula- will become hotter than the Barossa with 2°C increases”, but that “with a 2°C temperature increase in MJT, the two present vineyard regions of Tasmania will remain cooler than the present Mornington Peninsula²⁵.”

There is also no doubt that the last 20 years in Australia has seen a shift in public taste from heavy, alcoholic styles of wine to lighter, fresher more food friendly wines- this generally equates to a shift from warm climate to cool climate wines. It is arguable that, as Australia’s wine drinking population matured in both knowledge and appreciation of wine, this shift should have been entirely predictable.

Finally, Australia’s national strategy over the last decade has been to move away from the “bottled sunshine wine factory” image and to develop “regional heroes”- regions producing wines of finesse and character that will hold their own against the best in the world- again a perfect fit for Tasmania.

With all these boxes ticked, or, as James Halliday puts it “holding all the aces”, why has Tasmania not seen more rapid development of vineyards and wineries?

²¹ Gregory Jones, "Climate Change and Wine: Observations, Impacts and Future Implications," *Australia and New Zealand Wine Industry Journal* 21, no. 4 (2008). P.22

²² L.B. Webb, P.H. Whetton, and E.W.R. Barlow, "Impact on Australian Viticulture from Greenhouse Induced Temperature Change," in *MODSIM 2005 International Congress on Modelling and Simulation* (Melbourne: Modelling and Simulation Society of Australia and New Zealand, 2005). P.1504

²³ Richard Smart, "Climate Change and the Wine Sector: Is There the Will, and the Ability, to Cope?," *Australia and New Zealand Wine Industry Journal* 24, no. 8 (2009). P.20

²⁴ Ibid. p.22

²⁵ Ibid. p.21

Firstly, over the last 30 years, the Australian wine industry has been dominated by large corporations. In 2010 Treasury Wine Estates and Accolade Wines alone accounted for about 45% of all branded wine sales in Australia, while the top 20 wine companies accounted for around 90% of total sales. The other 2,457 Australian wine companies competed for the remaining 10% of the market.²⁶ These large corporations are, not unnaturally, focused less on long term projects for the production of great wines and more on short term return to shareholders. Ruled more by businessmen and accountants than passionate winemakers, they see cool climate viticulture, with some justification, as high cost, high risk and low profit due to reduced and uncertain yields. This large company dominance has changed much of Australian wine “from being an expression of the uniqueness of a place to a homogenized corporate product²⁷”.

There has certainly been interest amongst smaller wine companies, with Robert Hill Smith, Brown Brothers and Shaw and Smith all moving into Tasmania in recent years. The reason that more companies are not spreading their climatic risk by planting or acquiring vineyards in Tasmania is probably the historically low profitability of the industry in recent years. Successive Deloitte reports²⁸ have shown small to medium sized companies returning from very small to negative returns on capital, leaving little to invest in expansion or relocation.

The Australian taxation regime has contributed to this problem. Sales tax on wine was introduced in 1984, dramatically reducing the profitability of vineyards and wineries, and has progressively risen since to 29%²⁹. This increase has paralleled the development timeline of the Tasmanian industry and has certainly slowed growth. The other impediment is the structure of the tax. Both the Oregon and New Zealand governments have long ago moved to volumetric systems of wine taxation³⁰, but Australia, despite the recommendations of the recent Henry report on taxation, still maintains a tax of 29% on value (plus 10% GST). This clearly advantages bulk wine sales and disadvantages the top

²⁶ "Winebiz.Com," Winetitles.

²⁷ Brian Sommers, *The Geography of Wine* (London: Penguin Books, 2008). P.244

²⁸ For the last 10 years, Deloitte have produced annual reports on the financial performance of Australian wineries for the Winemakers' Federation of Australia.

²⁹ Effectively 41% with GST.

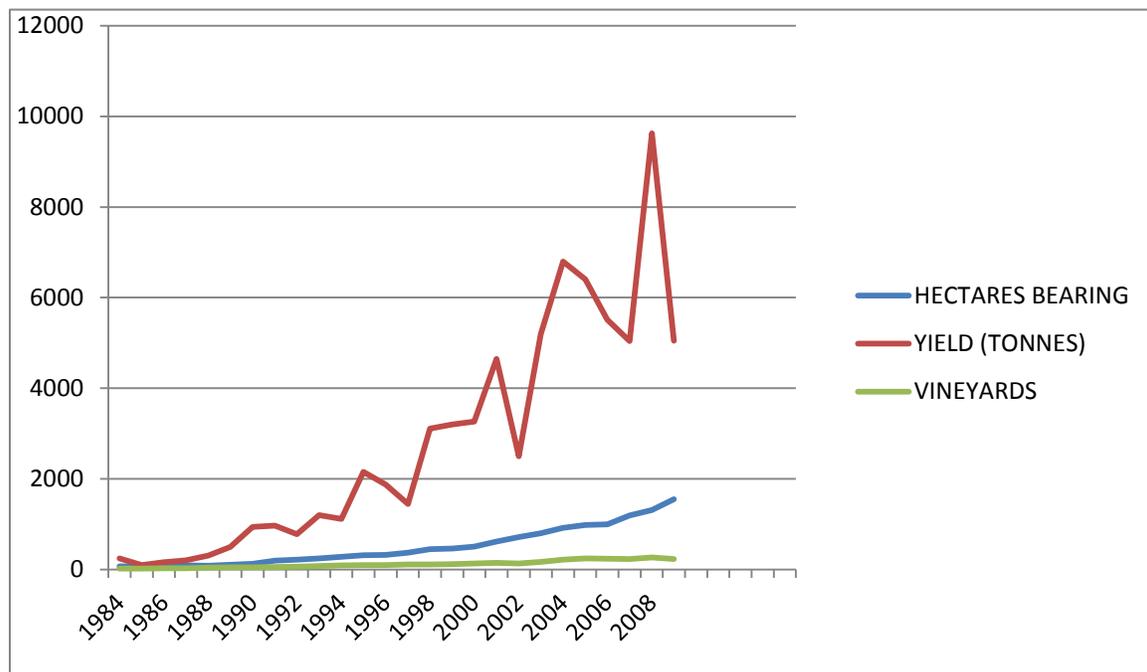
³⁰ Oregon taxes wine at 65 cents per gallon- New Zealand at \$2.60 per litre (plus 12.5% VAT)

end of the market- tax on a bottle of Penfolds Grange is more than \$130. Tasmania will always be a high cost/ high value producer, so the present tax system remains a significant impediment to the development of the Tasmanian wine industry.

The other factor impacting on small winery profitability has been the aggressive move of the two large supermarket chains, Coles and Woolworths, into wine retailing. Two companies dominating this sector of the industry, together with a national wine glut caused by the slowing of export growth and over-optimistic vineyard expansion, has driven prices down, and made Tasmanian wines less competitive both in their home market and nationally.

Whatever the reasons, the Australian wine industry has been slow to adapt to changing circumstances, continuing to develop areas which were initially chosen for fortified wine production, rather than make cool climate investments.

Figure 11



Industry growth Tasmania 1984-2009 Data from Wine Tasmania

For all the above reasons however, the prospects for the Tasmanian industry look bright. A slow, demand-driven rate of growth may well have been a boon for the industry, with

the limited supply of grapes keeping winegrape prices high, even when bottle sales slowed. New Zealand, for all its international success, has already been through one phase of rationalization, with a Government sponsored vine-pull scheme, and faces a current situation of oversupply that may again result in vineyard reduction. At the end of 2011, there were more than 70 vineyards for sale in Marlborough alone and the average export price had sunk to \$4.71 per bottle, a 48% reduction over the last three years.

Perhaps more by good luck than good management, Tasmania's slower growth rate has avoided this sort of boom/bust cycle, and Wine Tasmania, which represents the vast majority of growers in Tasmania, believes that 'steady as she goes' is the right policy for the state, with development only driven by the growing national and international demand for Tasmanian wine.

This thesis asks the question- why, with the industry clearly now headed for a bright future, did viticulture fail here in the 19th century, while all other states moved on to a commercial wine industry in the early 20th century. I contend that this was purely a matter of luck and timing, and that the same factors which mitigated against the success of the early attempts- climate, technology and public taste, are now the basis for its long term success.

The three factors are of course inter-related- public taste for lighter table wines gives cooler climate areas an immediate advantage, while the opposite was the case 200 years ago. While it is generally conceded that cooler climates make better wines, they are also the most viticulturally difficult environments, and this difficulty was compounded in the 19th century by lack of technology to control such hazards as frost or fungal disease.

Climate

In Chapter 4, I presented evidence to show that the climate in the 1820s was significantly cooler than today. If the Tasmanian climate is regarded as viticulturally marginal today, it would have been even more so in 1823. It was nevertheless, viticulturally viable. Good wines were certainly made and wine industries prospered in cooler northern hemisphere

climates. The interesting contrast is of course, that the Tasmanian climate was then seen as the major impediment to success- now it is the major competitive advantage.

Technology and Expertise

Today's superior technology allows for better site selection, better varietal and clonal selection, and at least partial protection against the natural hazards of frost, wind, pests and diseases. Tasmania was at a significant disadvantage in the early colony, lacking the immigrants with viticultural experience (and technological expertise) that the other states exploited. That early impediment has now turned into an advantage, with Tasmania attracting many talented young viticulturists and winemakers, drawn to the challenge of making great wine in a genuinely cool climate. And of course, over that period, Australia has moved from a viticultural backwater to a leader in wine education and vineyard and winery technology. Developments in temperature controlled fermentation, cultured yeasts and the use of stainless steel fermentors have all been boons to cool climate production.

Public taste

In his 2004 thesis³¹ John Barker documents the worldwide decline of "vin ordinaire" over the last 50 years and talks about the "shifting social values" of wine. Over that period wines of quality have moved from being the "preserve of the upper classes" to the point where they dominate the general market. In Australia, factors such as greater disposable incomes, consumer education, changes in social attitude to alcohol and cosmopolitan dining have all played their part in making wine "not just plonk" but a consumer item to be appreciated and valued. The powerful wine media in Australia has been totally focused on "quality wine" for three decades, wines differentiated by variety, region and individual maker. In Australia the trend has seen a shift from the mass produced wines of the hot irrigated regions, to lighter, more food-friendly styles from cooler regions, with "cool climate" becoming a marketing plus and a quality indicator.

³¹ John Barker, "Different Worlds: Law and the Changing Geographies of Wine in France and New Zealand" (University of Auckland, 2004).

So, in the context of shifting public taste, in the modern era Tasmania has simply been in the right place at the right time. The 19th century handicap of trying to sell lighter table wine to a market that preferred heavy, sweet, fortified wine, has become an asset as the Tasmanian style has become the mainstream preference.

APPENDIX A

LIST OF VINES IMPORTED BY THE LAUNCESTON HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY IN 1843 PUBLISHED IN THE LAUNCESTON EXAMINER, 18 OCTOBER, 1843

From Busby's first, or private collection.

25 *Madelaine, white, oblong, early sweet, table grape*

35 *White Frontignac (Muscat)*

43 *Muscat of Alexandria*

45 *Pineau blanc*

49 *Pineau noir*

50 *Pineau dore*

51 *Pineau vert*

52 *Pineau blanc (same as 46)*

56 *Pineau gris*

54 *Black Hamburgh*⁶⁰⁹

From the second collection

26 *Clotat (parsley leaved)*

36 *White round grape (great bearer)*

From the third, or Montpellier collection.

27 *Large black table grape*

42 *Tinta*

- 62 *Pineau liverdun*
- 184 *Morillon, small black (earliest)*
- 298 *Small black*
- 391 *Early white grape (variety of Chasselas)*
- 333 *Mausal blanc (early)*
- 355 *Sauvignien cendre, white, sweet prolific*
- 362 *Raisin perle (jura)(pearl colored)*
- 356 *Pineau blanc (cote d'or)*
- 382 *Variety of pineau*
- 385 *Raisin vert (bas rhin pinea)*
- 491 *Similar to 184, perhaps the same.*

APPENDIX B

LAUNCESTON EXAMINER MONTHLY AGRICULTURAL AND HORTICULTURAL REPORT, OCTOBER, 1846

Vines.-As the season has arrived for planting out vine cuttings, it may be of use and perhaps an encouragement to some to extend their plantations, if we give a selection of the best kinds, which, thanks to the Horticultural Gardens, are to be had readily there, as well as in many private gardens. The selection is for table grapes, and according to the order of their ripening. As soon as all the varieties at the gardens have fruited, the society will of course publish its own catalogue.

No 401. Black Burgundy, or small cluster. (This is also one of the very best for wine.)

48, 356, 10. Very similar, and for the table may be pronounced equal. They belong to the White Pineau, or Cluster family ; and in size and flavour they nearly resemble the last. They are all, however, more remarkable for sweetness than flavor.

S-6. Gouais.- White and semi-transparent. Has not much flavor unless thoroughly ripe; a great bearer, and good also for wine.

S-4. Black Muscat.-The earliest of the Muscats, and one of the very choicest grapes.

54. Black Hamburgh.-Of this noble grape little need be added. For size and beauty its flavour is unrivalled ; its qualities have hardly even yet been fully

developed. A single instance has been adduced in England of branches weighing so much as 5 lbs.--not from any empirical system, but from a practice founded on the truest deductions of science.

50. Pineau Gris.-A very pretty small fruit of the cluster family, and black and oblong, much more so than any other; it is sweet, but not remarkable for flavour, though deserving encouragement.

35. White Muscat.- A choice grape, highly perfumed taste, semi-transparent, and the basis of the Frontignac wines.

27. Very large, black, of good flavor when thoroughly ripened, and keeps long.

42. Muscat of Alexandria-Berries large white, oblong; generally reckoned the choicest grape known ; its flesh is firm, having a delicate perfume. It requires a warm situation, and when well ripened will keep a long time. It is the grape from which Malaga raisins are made, and is the basis of sherry wines. It has been exhibited in perfection at all the recent shows of the society.

APPENDIX C

CATALOGUE OF PLANTS IN THE ROYAL SOCIETY'S GARDENS, QUEEN'S PARK, HOBART TOWN -1857 & 1865

1857- VINES

Asmanhausen	Muscat rouge
Australian white cluster	Muscat Alexandre
Black cluster	Muscat gris
Black Prince	Pinear blanc
Black Frontignac	Pinear noir
Black Hamburgh	Rauschling, Rhine
Burgundy noir	Seyras Hermitage
Burgunday true	Sweet Walter
Carbenet Savignien	Tenta
Chasselas	Verdot
Grizzley Frontignac	Verdelho
Large round black grape	Wantage
Malbeck	White crystal
Mestier blanc	Zante currant

1865- VINES

Asmenhausen	Large round black
August Cleoner	Malbeck
Australian White Cluster	Meslier blanc
Barbarossa	Muscat, Alexander
Black Cluster	Muscat, Cannon Hall
Black Prince	Muscat, Clare
Blussard blanc	Oporto black
Burgundy noir	Pinear blanc
Burgundy true	Pinear noir
Carbenot savignier	Rauschling Rhine
Chasselas	Seyras
Ciotat	Shepherd's Seedling
Clevner August	St. Peter's black
Foster's Seedling	St. Peter's Wests
Frontignac, black	Sweet Water
Frontignac, red	Teviot
Frontignac, grizzly	Tinta
Gouais	Verdelho
Hamburgh black	Verdot
Hamburgh champion	Wantage
Hamburgh golden	White crystal
Kiengheimer	Zante Currant
Lady Downes	

APPENDIX D

GRAPE VARIETIES IMPORTED INTO TASMANIA IN THE 19TH CENTURY

variety	Modern name	references
Almeria		A Spanish white grape which requires cross-pollination, imported into Victoria by Dr Campbell in 1894. When the Victorian agriculture department would not permit the importation, the cuttings were sent on to the Tasmanian horticultural gardens for propagation.
American vines		The Mercury reports in 1883 the importation of “10 or 12 varieties of American vines, principally from seed supplied by Baron F. von Mueller”, to the Royal Society gardens. Some were wine varieties, but mainly to be used as phylloxera-proof vine stock.
Asmanhausen	Klieb-roed?	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857 & 1865. Asmanhausen is known for the only red wine in the Rhinegau, known as klieb-roed, so it may be that grape, described by McMullen as similar to burgundy in good years
August cleoner	Clevner	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1865.
Australian white cluster		Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857 & 1865.
Barbarossa		Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1865. A red variety from Corsica and Emilia-Romagna. Known as barbaroux in France (Clarke)
Black cluster	Pinot noir	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857 & 1865. Advertised by Mr Collins of Liverpool Street in 1827 as “Black Cluster Vine Plants, superior to any other for ripening in the island”. One of the varieties recommended for Tasmania by Henty in 1864. Grown by Gaunt at Windermere and Murdoch in Coal River Valley
Black Constantia		Variety been brought in by Gaunt for his Windermere vineyard. Constantia was a sweet dessert wine from the Cape (red and white) made from Muscat Blanc a Petit Grains

		(and its red mutation), Muscat of Alexandria and Pontac (Robinson)
Black Damascus		Mentioned in the Courier as being propagated in Hobart in 1835
Black Prince	Cinsault	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857 & 1865. Variety in the Merbein collection 1995.
Black Frontignac	Muscat of Hamburg?	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857. Listed in 1865 as Frontignac, black. Mentioned in 1848 as growing in Mr H. Lipscombe's garden in Sandy Bay. Frontignac is an Australian synonym for muscat so this may have been muscat of hamburg, generally used as a table grape. Black frontignac a variety in the Merbein collection 1995.
Black Hamburg	Trollinger? (Robinson)	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857. Grown by Gaunt at Windermere. Variety in the Merbein collection 1995.
Black Tripoli		Mentioned in the Courier as being propagated in Hobart in 1835
Blussard Blanc		Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1865.
Burgundy noir	Pinot noir?	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857 & 1865. Grown in the Horticultural Gardens, Launceston. Probably a synonym for Black Cluster- John Macarthur imported Burgundy cuttings in 1817
Burgundy true	Pinot noir?	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857 & 1865. Bridgeman gives True Burgundy as a synonym for Black Cluster.
Carbenet Savignien	Cabernet sauvignon	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857 & 1865. Spelled carbenot savignier in 1865. Grown by Macarthur at Camden Park.
Chasselas	Chasselas	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857 & 1865. Inferior wine variety- golden chasselas is a common table grape.
Claret		Recommended for viticulture in the Courier 1849. McIntyre writes that in NSW, Burgundy was generally (and inaccurately) known as the claret grape. Alternatively could be Clairette Blanche, known as Blanquette in NSW.
Clotat		Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1865. Planted in

		Horticultural Gardens, Launceston 1843- from Busby's collection.
Clevner August	Gewurtztraminer? or Pinot Blanc	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1865. Listed separately from "august cleoner" above but may refer to same grape. Clevner (or klevner) apparently used as a synonym for a number of varieties in Alsace (usually members of the Pinot family- Robinson).
Foster's Seedling		Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1865. White table grape variety from England
Frontignac, red	Red frontignac-	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1865. Bridgeman gives red frontignac as a synonym for red Muscat of Alexandria
Frontignac, white	Muscat	Planted in Horticultural Gardens, Launceston 1843- from Busby's collection. Robinson gives frontignac as an Australian synonym for muscat blanc a petits grains. Introduced into NSW by McArthur about 1829. Grown by Macarthur at Camden Park. (Laffer)
Grizzly Frontignac	Muscat blanc a petit grains	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857 & 1865. Prince gives muscat gris as a synonym
Gouais	Gouais (La Folle?)	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1865. Imported into NSW by John Macarthur in 1817 Grown in the Horticultural Gardens, Launceston. White grape originally grown in France and thought to be an ancestor of chardonnay (Clark) Laffer gives La Folle as a synonym.
Hamburgh black	Muscat Hamburg?	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1865. Grown under glass at Mona Vale (imported from NSW) from 1868. Sometimes called the Hampton Court vine (Prince). Planted in Horticultural Gardens, Launceston 1843- from Busby's collection. Introduced into NSW by Macquarie about 1829
Hamburgh champion		Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1865. The Mercury reports "golden champion" grapes at Mona Vale in 1876.
Hamburgh golden		Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1865.
Klengheimer		Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1865.

Lady Downes		Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1865. Lady Downes Seedling a variety in the Merbein collection 1995.
La Folle	Gouais? Folle Blanche?	Grown by Gaunt at Windermere “known at Hobart Town as the Pensbury”. Possibly Folle Blanche from Western France. Laffer gives Gouais as a synonym.
Large Round Black Grape		Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857 & 1865--presumably unidentifiable.
Madelaine		Planted in Horticultural Gardens, Launceston 1843- from Busby’s collection. Early ripening table or wine grape from England.
Malbeck	Malbec	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857 & 1865. One of the varieties recommended for Tasmania by Henty in 1864
Matarot	Mourvedre (Mataro)	Not in Society’s catalogues but Henty reports seeing the variety at the Society’s gardens. One of the varieties recommended for Tasmania by Henty in 1864. Imported into NSW by Busby. Grown by Macarthur at Camden Park.
Mausal blanc		Planted in Horticultural Gardens, Launceston 1843- from Busby’s collection. Could be mauzac blanc? (from SW France)
Mestier blanc	Meslier St Francois?	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857 & 1865. Spelt meslier in 1865. Meslier St Francois is a white grape grown in the Loire.
Morillon		Planted in Horticultural Gardens, Launceston 1843- from Busby’s collection. Old name for chardonnay in France (Robinson)
Muscat Alexandre	Muscat of Alexandria Muscat Gordo Blanco	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857 & 1865. Spelt Alexander in 1865. Grown in the Horticultural Gardens, Launceston. Imported from the Cape by Sir Thomas Brisbane in 1824- said to be a grape used in Constantia.
Muscat Cannon Hall	Cannon Hall Muscat	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1865. A variety closely related to Muscat of Alexandria, created at Canon Hall, Barnsley
Muscat clair	May be Claire Mayol Muscat	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857 & 1865. Spelt clare in 1865. Claire Mayol Muscat is a variety grown in Languedoc/Roussillon

Muscat gris	Grizzly frontignac?	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857. Bridgeman gives muscat gris as a synonym for grizzly frontignac.
Muscat rouge		Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857. Introduced to NSW in 1825 by the Australian Agriculture Co. (Laffer)
Muscat white, purple and black	White muscat= muscat of Alexandria (Laffer)	Grown by Gaunt at Windermere. Black and White Muscat grown in the Horticultural Gardens, Launceston. Laffer believes White muscat to be muscat of Alexandria previously brought into NSW by Campbell from the Cape in 1805
Oporto black	Black Portugal	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1865. Introduced to NSW by John Macarthur in 1817. Robinson gives Oporto as a synonym for the Hungarian Kekoportó
Pinear blanc	Pinot blanc	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857 & 1865. Probably a misspelling of pineau- Prince gives white burgundy as a synonym. Often confused with chardonnay. Planted in Horticultural Gardens, Launceston 1843- from Busby's collection. Pinot blanc is a white mutation of pinot gris (Robinson)
Pineau dore		Planted in Horticultural Gardens, Launceston 1843- from Busby's collection. Dore means golden.
Pineau gris	Pinot gris	Planted in Horticultural Gardens, Launceston 1843- from Busby's collection. Grown by Macarthur at Camden Park.
Pineau liverdun		Planted in Horticultural Gardens, Launceston 1843- from Busby's collection.
Pinear noir	Pinot noir	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857 & 1865. Probably a misspelling of pineau, an early version of pinot. Planted in Horticultural Gardens, Launceston 1843- from Busby's collection.
Pineau vert		Planted in Horticultural Gardens, Launceston 1843- from Busby's collection.
Rauschling, Rhine		Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857 & 1865. Old German variety still grown in Switzerland
Sauvignen cendre		Planted in Horticultural Gardens, Launceston 1843- from Busby's collection. White. Could be describing the colour of the berries- ash-grey???

Scyras Hermitage	Shiraz	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857 & 1865. Listed as scyras in 1865. One of the varieties recommended for Tasmania by Henty in 1864. "Black syriac or black Damson" was grown by Gaunt at Windermere. Scyras the early French name for shiraz or syrah. Introduced into NSW as red hermitage by Dutton (1829) and later (1832) imported by Busby as ciras (Laffer)
Shepherd's Seedling	Probably Riesling	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1865.
St Peter's black		Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1865.
St Peter's West's	Black Lombardy	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1865. Bridgeman gives Black Lombardy as a synonym (possibly Barbera?)
Sweet Water		Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857 & 1865. Spelt Sweet Walter in 1857. Mentioned in 1848 as growing in Mr H. Lipscombe's garden in Sandy Bay. Described in the Courier in 1849 as "perhaps the worst wine grape that exists". Variety in the Merbein collection 1995.
Teviot		Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1865.
Tinta		Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857 & 1865. Planted in Horticultural Gardens, Launceston 1843- from Busby's collection. Spelt tinta in 1857. Tinta (meaning dark skinned) would have been only the first word in the name of a Spanish or Portuguese grape. Tinto is listed as a variety in the Merbein collection (1995)
Verdelho	Verdelho	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857 & 1865. One of the varieties recommended for Tasmania by Henty in 1864. Imported into NSW by the Australian Agricultural Co in 1825. Grown by Macarthur at Camden Park. Grown by Gaunt at Windermere. Laffer gives Madeira as a synonym.
Verdot	Petit Verdot	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857 & 1865.
Wantage		Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857 & 1865. Imported into NSW by the Australian Agricultural Co in 1825.

White Corinth		Introduced into NSW by MacArthur about 1829. Grown by Bonney at Perth.
White crystal		Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857 & 1865. 'Crystal' was grown by Gaunt at Windermere.
White muscadine		Recommended as a good wine grape in the Courier 1849, but late in ripening. Also known as Early Sweet Water (Prince)
White portuguis		Mentioned in 1848 as growing in Mr H. Lipscombe's garden in Sandy Bay. Probably portugieser- common in Hungary and Germany- Clarke reports that the name white portugieser "seems to be attached to several different vines"
White Umber		Mentioned in 1848 as growing in Mr H. Lipscombe's garden in Sandy Bay
Zante Currant	Zante Currant	Listed in the Royal Society Gardens Catalogue of Plants Hobart Town 1857 & 1865. Variety in the Merbein collection 1995.

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APPENDIX E

ORAL HISTORY RECORDINGS

INTERVIEWEE	DURATION	DATE(S) RECORDED
Alcorso, Caroline	0'.22"	September 12, 2011
Alcorso, Julian	2'.12"	Feb 22, 2011, March 21, 2011
Allen, Graeme	0.45"	Feb 21, 2011
Althaus, Peter and Ruth	1'.15"	Feb 21, 2011
Austwick, John	0.46"	March 9, 2011
Boden, Don	0.27"	May 14, 2010
Bosworth, Peter and Brenda	0.32"	March 21, 2011
Brewer, Mark	0.45"	March 24, 2010
Bryce, Stuart and Brenda	1'.50"	Feb 3, 2010
Bull, Geoff	1'.07"	March 1, 2010
Butler, Nick	0.54"	August 20, 2010
Cameron, Don	0.31"	August 16, 2010
Casimaty, Bill	1'.21"	March 26, 2010, November 18, 2010
Chromy, Josef	1'.16"	May 13, 2010
Cuthbert, Roderick	1'.13"	Feb 18, 2010
Demarte, Frank	0.32"	December 10, 2010
Ellis, Gerald	0.27"	June 17, 2010
Farquhar, Duncan	1'.07"	August 17, 2010
Franklin, Brian	0.18"	March 11, 2011
Green, Sir Guy	0.22"	March 22, 2011
Hardy, Bob	0.28"	December 10, 2010
Hood, Andrew	1'.01"	March 2, 2010
Hope, Peter	0.42"	Feb 4, 2011
Hyde, Steve	0.37"	Feb 17, 2010
Laing, Phil	1'.20"	July 5, 2010
Larter, Barry	0.40"	March 24, 2010
Lynch, Graeme	0.52"	June 16, 2010

INTERVIEWEE	DURATION	DATE(S) RECORDED
Lyne, Rodney	0.26"	March 11, 2011
Mahoney, George	1'.28"	Feb 2, 2010
Melick, Greg	0.40"	Feb 3, 2011
Menary, Bob	1'.15"	July 5, 2010
Mitchell, Jill	1'.28"	Feb 2, 2010
Myers, Lee	0.15"	March 4, 2010
O'Keefe, Greg	0.37"	August 17, 2010
O'Sullivan, Peter	0.33"	Feb 5, 2010
Park, George and Priscilla	1'.21"	May 11, 2010
Peacock, Fred	1'.08"	Feb 15, 2010
Phillips, Eric and Jetta	0.45"	December 10, 2010
Pirie, Andrew	3'.18"	March 9, 2010, November 16, 2010
Richardson, Richard	1'.06"	July 9, 2010
Scott, Gavin	1'.08"	May 18, 2010
Smart, Richard	1'.07"	December 6, 2010
Sundstrup, Bert	1'.28"	Feb 2, 2010
Taliaco, Pio	0.16"	Feb 3, 2011
Thorpe, John	1'.01"	June 15, 2010
Wiltshire, Graham and Nancy	2'.35"	March 3, 2010, May 5, 2010
Wing, Laurie	1'.00"	March 11, 2011
Winspear, Richard	0.57"	Feb 17, 20

APPENDIX F : COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND OFFICE BEARERS OF THE VINEYARDS ASSOCIATION OF TASMANIA- 1974-2006

Year	President	Secretary	Treasurer	Senior V President	Vice President	Committee	Committee	Committee	Committee	Committee	Committee	Executive Officer	Marketing	Technical Committee
1974	Claudio Alcorso	Graham Wiltshire	Graham Wiltshire			David Pirie	Richard Winspear	Mel Holman						
1975														
1976														
1977														
1978	Andrew Pirie	Leigh Gawith	Richard Winspear	David Pirie	Bob Menary	Max Reynolds								
1979			George Park			Gerald Ellis	Bob Haselgrove	Stephen Ferencz						
1980						Andrew Pirie	Julian Alcorso							
1981			Andrew Pirie	Gerald Ellis			Ralph Power							
1982			Gavin Scott		Julian Alcorso	John Austwick	Mark Semmens	George Park						
1983						Geoff Bull	Richard Richardson	Laurie Wing						
1984									Don Knight					
1985														
1986							Stuart Bryce	Leigh Gawith						
1987									Gerald Ellis					
1988			Andrew Pirie	Leigh Gawith	Geoff Bull	Graham Wiltshire		Eric Phillips	Richard Richardson	Marion Semmens				
1989				Richard Richardson	Leigh Gawith			Geoff Bull	Jane Gilham					
1990			Julian Alcorso	Gerald Ellis	Richard Richardson		Andrew Pirie			Peter	Alf Edgecombe	Paddy Baker		
1991														
1992	Andrew Hood	Jane Gilham						Althaus	Kyra Cuthbert					
1993	Hood	Gerald Ellis				Neil Colbeck	Jean B. Lecaillon							

1994				Rodney Lyne			Geoff Hewitt			Greg O'Keefe		Graham Allen		
1995						Nick Butler								
1996	Andrew Pirie				Andrew Hood			Fred Peacock				Malcolm McDonald		
1997					Russell Cook	Kim Seagram						Sheree McKinley		
1998		Fred Peacock		Gerald Ellis	Andrew Hood		Mike Beamish	Stuart Bryce	Chris Harrington			Jenny Newman		
1999	Stuart Bryce		R. Cuthbert V. Magnotta			Andrew Pirie	Mike Sharman	Rod Cuthbert				Di McArthur		
2000			Vic Magnotta		Andrew Pirie	Tony Scherer			Steve Devereaux					
2001						Peter Althaus						Kim Seagram	Tony Scherer	
2002							Judy Robinson	Fran Austin						
2003					Andrew Hood			Scott McKay						
2004									Michael Glover					Simon Stanley
2005						Andrew Pirie		Rod Thorpe	Sally McShane					
2006														Jeremy Dineen

VAT COMMITTEE MEMBERS SERVING 10 YEARS OR MORE

- Andrew Pirie 25 years
- Gerald Ellis 23 years
- Graham Wiltshire 15 years
- Claudio Alcorso 14 years
- Andrew Hood 12 years
- Richard Richardson 12 years
- Julian Alcorso 12 years
- Stuart Bryce 11 years
- George Park 11 years
- Geoffrey Bull 10 years

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